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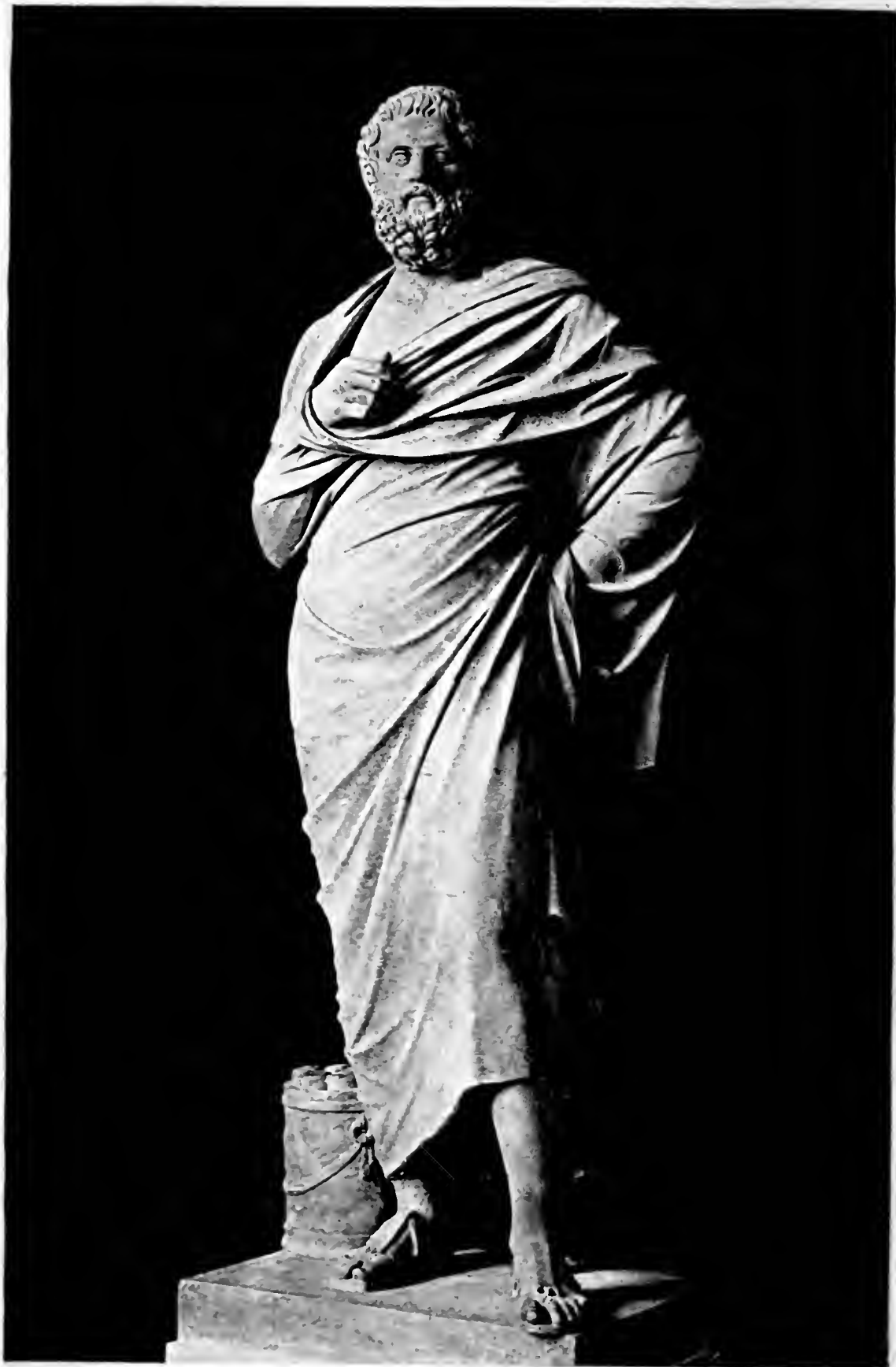






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Helio & Imp. Lemerrier & C<sup>ie</sup>

*From the statue in the Lateran Museum, Rome.*

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Edvard Munk

THE STUDENT'S MANUAL  
OF  
GREEK TRAGEDY

EDITED, WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION,  
FROM THE GERMAN OF  
DR. MUNK'S "GESCHICHTE DER GRIECHISCHEN LITERATUR"

BY  
A. W. VERRALL, LITT.D.

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

*With a Frontispiece Portrait of the Statue of Sophocles in the  
Lateran Museum at Rome*



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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### EURIPIDES AND MODERN CRITICISM.

I HAVE been asked to prepare for the press the following Manual of Greek Tragedy, which consists of certain chapters from the popular history of Greek Literature by Professor Munk, translated from the German by Mr. D. B. Kitchin, M.A.\* The volume ought, I think, to prove useful; it has the merit of treating the subject on the scale, neither too large nor too small, which is convenient to the student for whom it is intended. Among the many good books on Greek literature which we have in English, there is not perhaps any so well adapted in this respect to the beginner in *Æschylus* or *Sophocles*.

It is no part of my duty now to criticise in detail, or even in general, the opinions expressed in this book. They represent very fairly the current opinion, and in a work of this kind no more can be demanded or given. In my judgment the current opinion upon

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\* Of Merton House, Southwick, Sussex; late of Trinity College, Cambridge.

the three great tragedians is true, as we might expect, in proportion to the care, respect, and sympathy with which their works have been examined in recent times. With regard to Sophocles, who has been best loved and studied most, it is entirely just; with regard to Æschylus, it is, in spite of some grave misunderstandings, just in the main; with regard to Euripides, the greater part of whose works are seldom read and almost always with prejudice, the prevalent opinion is just only to a few plays, which appeal most directly to modern taste, but on the whole is unjust, and in some parts absurdly unjust. Believing this, I cannot present the popular view to the reader without a warning of its imperfection. To correct the prejudice, in the space which I can occupy, is out of the question; but I propose at least to prove the existence of it, by exhibiting the effect in a particular case. We will endeavour then to estimate the modern appreciation of Euripides' play *Andromache*.

It will be seen that in the severe condemnation, with which the author, in his general view of Euripides, counterbalances his praise, the *Andromache*, as usual, has a prominent place. It would appear that the play is utterly contemptible, a tissue of absurdities, if indeed the name of tissue is not too good for a set of scenes without any intelligible connexion. Now we may surely say, that this opinion, the modern opinion, if it may possibly be true, is on the face of it extremely

improbable. Euripides was regarded in Greece and Rome as a thinker and writer of the first importance. His extant plays are a selection, from a mass four times as large, made originally by the great critics of the ancient world. Many works were omitted which they greatly admired and we, as far as can be judged, should admire no less. It is not unlikely that, if we had the choice to make, we should choose rather differently. But for what conceivable reason can they have given preference to a piece which, if the modern account of it be not utterly false, no one could wish to read a second time? They certainly must have enjoyed and admired the *Andromache*. What right have we to think that they could be interested, any more than ourselves, in a story without any sequence, in actions without any efficient motive, in characters and situations without the least resemblance to life? A glance at p. 248 of this book will show that such and no better is the *Andromache*, as read by the moderns under the guidance of Schlegel and Hermann. Surely before this conclusion is accepted, the facts of the case should be ascertained with the utmost rigour, and every scruple should be carefully removed.

Let us now see to what extent modern criticism has yet complied with this condition. As the simplest way of approaching the question, I will give first the true description of the play. I say boldly "the true description"; for the facts are perfectly plain, and

may be verified by any one moderately acquainted with Greek.

The *Andromache*, like many of Euripides' plays, is essentially a story of his own time, though, in obedience to the law of the Athenian stage, the names of the characters are borrowed from legendary antiquity. The interest of it turns entirely upon a problem of society as it existed at the time. The problem has happily no application, at least in its Greek form, to a society unacquainted with slavery. Among the Greeks, whose slaves were often in birth and breeding the equals of their owners, and reduced to subjection only by the laws of war or simple robbery, the female slave was a natural cause of domestic peril and misery; and the increase of humane sentiments, as it did not destroy the institution, rather increased than diminished the mischief of it. The presence under the same roof of the wife and the mistress, and the children of both, was a not uncommon case, but did not fail, by being common, to produce its natural effects. Euripides was interested in the matter, both as a poet and as a philanthropist, both for the slave and for the free; and he illustrates in this play the wide-spreading opportunities of evil, which may be offered by such unnatural "division of the house."

The personages of the drama are nominally taken from legend; but the legendary incidents are so altered and recombined, that the story was for practical pur-

poses as new as a mere invention. The *dramatis personæ* are these: *Andromache*, formerly wife of Hector, made prisoner at the taking of Troy, slave and concubine of her captor, Neoptolemus; *Hermione*, wife of Neoptolemus, daughter of Menelaus, king of Sparta; *Menelaus*, her father; *Peleus*, father of Achilles (dead) and grandfather of Neoptolemus, a very old man, but still ruling in his small territory of Phthia; *Orestes*, son of Agamemnon and Clytæmnestra, nephew of Menelaus, and cousin of Hermione; *Molossus*, a child, son of Andromache by Neoptolemus; *slaves and others*, belonging to the households of Peleus and Neoptolemus. The scene is laid at the sanctuary of the sea-goddess Thetis, the mother of Achilles; this sanctuary, as here represented, is close to the house occupied now by Neoptolemus, but formerly by Peleus and Thetis; and Pharsalus, the capital and residence of Peleus, is at a short distance (*v.* 15). *Thetis* herself appears at the conclusion to deliver a kind of epilogue, but has no part in the action. The *Chorus* is composed of free women from the neighbourhood.

The play is opened by Andromache, who briefly relates her story. Her master Neoptolemus has quitted her since his marriage; but she and her child are nevertheless regarded with furious jealousy by Hermione, who is childless, and attributes her sterility to the criminal science of Andromache. Neoptolemus has gone to Delphi, to make atonement for an offence

against Apollo.\* In his absence has arrived Menelaus, with the purpose, as Andromache believes, of aiding his daughter to put both Andromache and Molossus to death. The child is concealed in another house, and Andromache herself has taken sanctuary. Another female captive from Troy, formerly slave to Andromache, and still loyal, now comes to confirm her fears, and to warn her that the enemy has discovered the hiding-place of Molossus. Andromache begs her friend to summon Peleus; she has tried other messengers; but, as nothing has been heard of him, they have doubtless shunned the risk. The slave consents, and departs on her errand.

Now upon the facts disclosed in this opening scene one question at once suggests itself. What can be the relations, characters, and purposes of the wife and her father, the partners in this "monstrous design"? Their action at least is insane. The extreme of jealousy is indeed a sort of madness; and for this reason only it is not incredible, that a mere girl,† delirious with passion and misled by her nearest adviser, might propose to murder openly, not only the woman who had been loved by her husband, but even his acknowledged and only child. She might herself be blind to the

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\* We are probably to understand, though it is not expressly stated, that Neoptolemus was prompted to seek this reconciliation by the barrenness of his wife, a matter supposed to be especially in the control of the Delphian deity.

† *V.* 326.

certain consequences, and to the fact that she was stabbing her own heart. But it seems inconceivable that this infatuation should be shared by another, by a man, and that her father should watch his time and take much labour, not to save her from such an act of suicide, but to suggest, abet, and execute it. Hermione is intelligible; Menelaus is at present an enigma.

Some women of Phthia, kindly disposed to the Trojan captive, and not knowing the whole of her danger, now come to advise submission. Hermione however breaks out upon them with a promptitude which convinces us that Andromache was not wrong in supposing herself to be watched. In a battle of words between the opponents the whole miserable situation is exposed to us. Andromache is at first bitterly reasonable, but soon becomes almost as wild as the wife, who finally dashes away, vowing that she has in reserve "a sure means to draw thee from this thy obstinate refuge."

The next scene explains the threat. Menelaus arrives, bringing the young Molossus, and bids Andromache choose between her child and herself. And now follows a dialogue which we read with amazement. Andromache, who even yet can scarcely believe that the politic conqueror of Troy is such a fool as he seems, lays before him the plain consequences of the crime he threatens to commit, and asks him what he proposes to gain. When his daughter is ignominiously cast upon



the world, is she to live out her ruined life under his roof? or will he find some other to accept from a murderer the hand of a murderess? What new sort of devotion to "the cause of a woman" is this? The question is unanswerable, and we expect with curiosity the explosion of the parental fury. But Menelaus is perfectly calm. The matter, he says, is indeed comparatively trifling, and may well appear below the regard of such a politician as himself! But to Hermione the recovery of her husband is the first of interests, and he chooses to assist his daughter. As for Neoptolemus, if his strict rights are perhaps infringed by punishing his slaves without his leave, between near relations such scruples are quite out of place! To await his return would be folly! She or the child—let Andromache choose at once. Thus compelled, the mother, as we expect, surrenders and quits the altar. Menelaus instantly declares the alternative to have been a mere trick. Andromache shall die; but the life of Molossus depends upon the will of Hermione. And without regard to the curses of the mother, he takes his two prisoners forthwith into the house.

We are now more puzzled than before. That Menelaus is cold-blooded and hard-hearted, so far from explaining his conduct, obscures it utterly. That Hermione is going the way to lose all but her life, and not improbably her life itself, is manifest to the by-standers upon the stage, to us, and to every one—



except the father. That he is blinded by passion, a Quixote of parental chivalry, is no longer imaginable. There is not a trace of passion about him, confessed or concealed. What then is he? We can only suppose with Andromache that he is a fool. But what a fool! What a perverse, incorrigible, and inconceivable fool!

The third scene opens. Hermione has condemned the child to die with the mother, and they are brought out by Menelaus for execution, both lamenting and the child beseeching in vain. Suddenly the aged Peleus (for the last messenger has been successful) is seen hurrying, with the aid of an attendant, to the place. He is frantic with rage at the insult to himself and his house; and naturally though, as the chorus observe, not wisely, considering the balance of strength, launches into a fierce denunciation of Menelaus, the Spartan connexion, and all belonging to them. The king of Sparta, wise and temperate man, is shocked and pained at this extravagance. To storm at a brother monarch, his nearest ally, because he proposes to punish the crimes of a detestable Trojan! Really he did not expect such a reception of his good offices. The by-standers vainly attempt to mediate; the old man is utterly uncontrollable, repeats his invectives more vehemently, assumes the protection of his great-grandson, and defies the whole power of Sparta to interfere.

It seems nevertheless that the scene can have but

one termination, when all is abruptly changed by a collapse on the part of Menelaus, not the less ridiculous because not unlike the rest of his absurd proceedings. He will withdraw from a disagreeable contest, which he did not provoke! His time is not to be wasted; he has projected a military expedition in the neighbourhood of Sparta, and must return at once! The present dispute can be settled hereafter by a family council. And for Sparta, then and there, without so much as entering the house, he sets forth, the preparations for his journey being, we must suppose, already made; while Peleus, despising the warrantable doubts of Andromache as to the sufficiency of his escort, repairs with her and her child to the city.

Menelaus is gone. Without a word or a message to his dear daughter? Without one word, as the following scene apprises us. The situation may be laughable to others, but it is tragic enough to Hermione. The news of her father's departure throws her, as well it may, into a madness of despair. The shock has restored her reason and awakened her selfish conscience. She can now see that her mere attempt must confound her. How is she to face her husband? She never will. She will die rather. A favourite attendant comes rushing in terror to entreat the assistance of the visitors, and is quickly followed by the girl herself, a ludicrous and scarcely pitiable spectacle, frantic, dishevelled, and flying she knows not whither. And now

occurs an incident more astonishing, if we have any astonishment left, than all before. At this very moment a traveller arrives. Who is it? Who but Orestes? He is on his way to the oracle of Dodona, and finding himself in Phthia has seized the opportunity of inquiring after his cousin Hermione. He has never ceased to take an interest in her, and would be glad to know that she is alive and well. Scarcely has he given these explanations to the chorus, when Hermione flings herself at his feet. Orestes is thunderstruck. Hermione confesses her situation, and Orestes, who follows the confession with ready sympathy, now perceives that she has reason for her terror. Hermione beseeches him to escort her to some safe distance, and suggests her father's house. She deplores herself in pathetic terms. She has not been wicked without excuse; she was misled, tempted, forced on by mischievous neighbours; it is always so, if women are allowed to meet; the men should protect them better. Her neighbours there present rebuke her with a contemptuous pity.

But it quickly appears that no entreaties are wanted. Her cousin (the pilgrim to Dodona, who "hoped she was still living") was aware, as he now admits, of her domestic unhappiness, and only waiting to offer the very service she has asked. It is his right. By her father's promise she was his own; and though Neoptolemus abused his advantage, when Orestes, by aveng-

ing upon his mother the death of his father Agamemnon, was disgraced and weak, Orestes is yet not forgetful or ungenerous, and will conduct his cousin to Sparta with cousinly fidelity. To this romantic declaration Hermione, who can think of nothing but her terrors, answers evasively. Her hand is not hers to bestow ; her father will consider her situation. Only let them set forth at once, lest Neoptolemus should return or Peleus pursue. Her cousin reassures her : Peleus is old and helpless ; and as for Neoptolemus, there are friends of Orestes in Delphi, who will make sure of him, if a certain plot does not fail, which now it would be premature to describe. And with this he hurries her away.

This extraordinary scene gives to the mysteries of the drama a new and very disquieting turn. The situation is more perplexing than ever. What are we to make of this cousin and suitor, who drops at the door, as if from the clouds, at the very hour and minute when the fugitive wife comes out of it ? And what of the design against Neoptolemus ? Is it coincident only with the fantastic performances in Phthia, miraculously coincident ? Or are they connected ; and if so——?

We are not left much longer in suspense. The next and last scene opens with the entrance of Peleus, recalled by the tidings of the flight. He has scarcely assured himself of the facts, and is about to despatch a warning to Neoptolemus, when one of the prince's

companions arrives, and announces that Neoptolemus is dead! He has been murdered in Delphi "by some of the sacred city and the Mycenæan allied with them." Peleus faints, but recovering begs for a full account. And the reply discloses to us, first, that when Neoptolemus arrived in Delphi, *Orestes was there himself*, preparing for the murder by raising false suspicions among the populace; and further, that when Neoptolemus was actually overpowered by surprise in the temple-court, *Orestes himself was there* and aiding with his own hand; and further, that *it is some days since all this was done*, for the narrator and his companions have carried the body of their lord along with them all the way from Delphi to Pharsalus, and *it is even now at the door!*

And now indeed, if by the light of this discovery we retrace in thought the events of which we have been spectators, the whole, from point to point, explains itself only too well. Why did Orestes tell two stories, and both false, about himself and his intentions? Because he came expressly to possess himself of Hermione, who would have turned in horror from the murderer of the man she loved, and was only to be captured by pretending the part of an escort and playing upon her terror? Why did Orestes appear at the moment when her fear was at the height? Because (as he said, only we did not then comprehend) he was lying in wait for that very moment. How do we now

interpret the proceedings of Menelaus? Why did he urge his "monstrous design"? Why suffer it to be interrupted by Peleus? Why abandon it so abruptly and on so preposterous a pretext? Because these actions were all necessary parts of one plan, laid for their common advantage by two utterly unscrupulous men, a cruel and politic plan, aimed, not at the insignificant slave-woman and her child, but at Neoptolemus first, and afterwards at his wife.

In the acts and language of Menelaus and Orestes themselves we can now read their motives with ease.\* Menelaus from first to last regarded the hand of his daughter as a commodity to be sold, as dearly as possible, for a useful alliance. He promised her first to his nephew, as the heir of Argos and Mycenæ. He broke his promise in favour of the house of Peleus, when Neoptolemus rose in importance through the war against Troy, and Orestes had fallen into disgrace. He found that he had over-reached himself; the Phthian marriage was a failure, a cause not of friendship but division; and he was eager, if possible, to recover his property and sell again. Orestes, supported throughout by the Delphic oracle (an institution which Euripides detested), was again a person of importance. His object was perfectly simple, to re-unite himself to his family, and to recover his

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\* All that is given here is implied in various parts of the play.

rank.\* Uncle and nephew needed each other and came to terms. They found their opportunity in the visit of Neoptolemus to Delphi. Part of their design was comparatively easy and not, according to Greek notions, unavowable; the other part not only revolting, but extremely difficult. Hermione, by everything in her character, by her love and pride, her fury and cowardice, would have been prompted to reject with more than common loathing a union which she herself with unconscious forecast denounces as no better than incest,† even if any father could have openly proposed such a match. That Orestes should wed the widow of his victim was almost impossible, but not quite. Could she by any diabolical ingenuity be made to throw herself, while yet ignorant of her situation, into his power, and under circumstances which might even cast on her the suspicion of having shared his plans? The fatal composition of the family (the root of all the evil) showed a way by which this might be attained. It was a way indeed which involved the risk, if not the sacrifice, of two innocent lives; but the conspirators cared nothing for that. Menelaus repaired to Phthia, whither, after the murder of Neoptolemus, Orestes hastened with the news, gaining upon the

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\* He explains himself (*vv.* 974 foll.) with almost perfect candour to Hermione, relying, with reason, upon the blindness of her ignorance and present fears.

† *Vv.* 170 foll.



bearers of the corpse, in the long and difficult journey, just the hours necessary for the work to be done. And the rest we already know.

The play is now essentially complete. It is not the habit of the Greek dramatists, when the knot has in fact been untied, to go formally through the process of solution. In a modern play the application of the discovery to the foregoing narrative (in some such fashion as we have made it here) would be put, with whatever sacrifice of nature and truth, into the mouths of the actors. Euripides judges it enough that we do now know all which we need to know. As a concession to sentiment however, he thinks well to give some assurance as to the fortune of those innocently involved in the tragedy; and accordingly Thetis appears, and predicts a satisfactory future for Andromache, Molossus, and even, by a miracle, for Peleus. But all this is of no serious importance.

Such in the bare outline is the *Andromache*. In such an outline all the best is of course lost. But even here, I hope, enough is exhibited to prove the extraordinary power and imagination of the inventor. The mere economy of the piece is masterly; every one of the characters, being exactly what they are, contributes and is necessary to a story fascinating by its strangeness, and yet, the combination of circumstances being given, perfectly consistent with nature. The structure is equally impressive. Literature can



hardly present a dramatic stroke more vivid than that tragic illumination, by which the apparently fantastic comedy of the intrigue is suddenly transfigured into its veritable horror. Like almost all Greek dramas, and indeed all dramas in proportion to their excellence, the play gains immensely by repetition. In particular, the scene between Hermione and Orestes, when read with knowledge of the whole, goes as far perhaps as art can go in arousing that emotion which is neither sad nor gay, neither tragic nor comic, nor classable otherwise than as broadly and characteristically human.

And now let us turn to modern criticism and consider how far, before denouncing the *Andromache*, it has performed the duty of ascertaining the facts. It will hardly perhaps be believed (though it may easily be ascertained), that *neither the original critics, nor any of those who repeat their strictures, have so much as discovered that the statements made by Orestes are meant to be untrue.* In censuring the drama, they actually take it for granted, that when Orestes enters he really is on his way to Dodona, and that when he departs, the design against Neoptolemus really is, as he pretends, still in the future! The reader may conceive, though it would be endless to trace fully, the consequences of this prodigious mistake. Some of them the modern critics themselves have traced, converting them simply into so many reproaches

against Euripides! In the first place, the story becomes flatly impossible. Orestes has scarcely got away from Pharsalus when the body of Neoptolemus is brought in. Yet we are told that he was in Delphi at the death. The critics see this, and the whole absurdity of it; but instead of looking for their own blunder, they turn upon the poet and talk grave nonsense about a "breach of the unities." In the next place, the arrival of Orestes and the whole of his conduct become improbable and irrational to the last degree. The critics see this, and charge it against Euripides. The conduct and character of Menelaus become equally extravagant and unworthy of serious attention. Every part of the piece is a separate offence; none of them is legitimately connected with another; no link of sequence, no common interest, commends or redeems the whole. All this the critics perceive and assert, and all this mass of absurdity they discharge without demur upon the author.

I proposed at the outset of these remarks to show that Euripides has in modern times been the object of prejudice; and in this case I think it now sufficiently proved. It is not indeed a proof of prejudice against an author that his work is misconstrued. In the common expositions of Æschylus there are errors, errors not minute, but large and of serious consequence. But these errors prove no prejudice, because

the works to which they refer are admired in spite of them, and their effect is as far as possible concealed and extenuated. But to condemn and to despise, upon grounds so ill ascertained, a work which comes to us with such a guarantee as an extant play of the Attic stage, is a proof that in the minds of the judges something has counteracted the immense presumption in its favour. And this something is a prejudice.

The origin and history of the prejudice against Euripides is a matter beyond my present scope. If any one man was the cause of it, it was Schlegel, a critic whose mischievous qualities were here much more effective than his virtues. It is needless, I hope, to point out that nothing here said reflects in any way upon Professor Munk. It was not his function, in a manual for students, to correct current opinions, but to represent them. To most of his views, to much of what he writes about Euripides, I could readily subscribe. I desire only to warn the reader, not of this book more than another, that on the subject of Euripides modern criticism is to be received with extreme caution, and that when we study one of his works, we had best forget everything except this, that if we do not admire it, then, from the circumstances of the case, it is a thousand chances to one that the fault is in ourselves.\*

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\* In the *Hypothesis*, or brief introduction in Greek, prefixed

It only remains to acknowledge, on behalf of the publishers, the permission kindly given by the late Dean of Wells, and by Messrs. Isbister & Co., to make use of Dr. Plumptre's translations in the chapters on Æschylus and Sophocles. The news of his death, arriving even while I write, invests this duty with an unexpected accompaniment of regret.

to the *Andromache*, occurs the remark, "τὸ δράμα τῶν δευτέρων, *the play* (or *the plot*) *is one of the second plays* (or perhaps *plays of the second division*).” The remark apparently refers to some otherwise unknown classification, and is no longer intelligible. I notice it only because it has sometimes been mistranslated “this is one of the *inferior* plays,” and cited as a depreciation. We have no reason to think that the classification was according to supposed merit, rather than according to date, or the nature or origin of the story, or some other principle. It may be added, as a point of general interest, that the *Hypothesis* in its present form is, like most of these prefaces, of no authority or value whatever. There is no trace in it of research or even of attentive reading; and slight as it is, it is not even correct. It states, as part of the story, that Menelaus was summoned from Sparta by Hermione to assist in her plot (ἐβουλεύετο κατ’ αὐτῆς θάνατον, μεταπεμψαμένη τὸν Μενέλαον). Not the least hint of this summons will be found in the prologue (vv. 39-42), or in any part of the play; it is both untrue to nature and incompatible with the essence of the story. What is properly attributed to Hermione is the “desire,” not the design, for the death of her rival, “βούλεται δέ με κτανεῖν.” It is Menelaus who designs to use this passion for his own ends, and who comes to Phthia of his own motion for that purpose.

# THE STUDENT'S GREEK TRAGEDIANS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### TRAGEDY AND THE SATYRIC DRAMA.

THE drama in the literature of Greece may be divided into tragedy and the lighter satyric drama on one side, and comedy on the other. Both tragedy and the satyric drama had their origin in the dithyrambic choric songs at the Athenian feasts of Dionysus. Chief among these was the festival of the *Great Dionysia*, which was held at the end of the Athenian year, in March, and attracted to Athens a large number of visitors. Next in importance come the *Lenæa*, celebrated in January, and the small or rustic *Dionysia* in December. It may be mentioned that at the Feast of Pots (*Xύτροι*), the third day of the *Anthesteria*, in February, cyclic choral odes were sung, and a varied pantomimic performance was given. But these were, properly speaking, not stage-plays. At the Great Dionysia, three consecutive days were devoted to theatrical representations. On the forenoon of each there were three tragedies and one satyric drama, or sometimes four tragedies, of

which the last was of a lighter character ; in the afternoon there was a comedy. At the Lenæa too the performances lasted three days. The small, or rustic, Dionysia were celebrated throughout Attica, one of the places of celebration being the Piræus, or port of Athens, which had a theatre of its own.

The word *tragædia* (τραγῳδία) was originally applied to the dithyramb, according to Bergk, because the chorus came on dressed as satyrs, in the skins, and therefore with the appearance, of goats (τράγοι). Others derive the word from the sacrifice of a goat to Dionysus, after which the chorus, encircling the altar, began their song. It has also been asserted that at an early period a goat was the prize of the contest, and that thence the name tragedy arose (*Schol. Plat.*, p. 153). Dialogue between the leader of the chorus and the chorus itself (διαδραματίζειν, *Diog. Laert.*, iii. 56) had been one of the features of the old dithyramb, which had taken strong hold at Athens through the influence of Lasus ; and this may well be considered the first germ of dramatic life. Aristotle again records (*Poet.*, c. 4) that tragedy sprang from improvised verse-making, started by the leaders of the dithyramb, ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον. Henceforth the development of dramatic poetry as an independent literary form lay in the elaboration of dialogue, the only way in which scenes can be represented before us as they really occurred. Thespis, of the Attic deme Icaria, is sometimes said to have been the

first writer of tragedy (about ol. 61 = 532 B.C.); and it is usual to add that he was the first to introduce an actor (ὑποκριτής); i.e. either a speaker who served to relieve the chorus, or the actor of a part written for him by the poet. But we must bear in mind that this actor, whose part, we may add, was taken by the poet himself, conversed with the leader of the chorus, or more at large with the chorus in general, and the introduction of the leader in narrative monologues, or even in short dialogues with the chorus, had already been long used by the dithyrambists. Epigenes of Sicyon, who lived a considerable time before Thespis, was held by his fellow townsmen to be the inventor of tragedy. But it is impossible now to determine whether the first beginnings of dramatic art are to be ascribed to so early a date, or whether this poet was merely the first to make use in the dithyramb of matter other than the legends connected with Dionysus. Thespis at any rate made the episode, or scene in dialogue, an essential element of tragedy. According to Aristotle (*Themist. Or.* xxvi., p. 316), to him must be ascribed the invention of the prologue and dialogue (ῥῆσις). If this be so, we may conclude that he led up by a narrative prologue to the action of the drama; and this, after a song by the chorus, was subsequently carried on by means of dialogue between the actor and the leader, as mouthpiece of the chorus, the whole being interspersed with other songs. The use of linen or wooden masks,



provided with suitably large mouth-pieces, to strengthen the voice, which also has been attributed to Thespis, enabled the actor to appear successively in a number of different characters. But so long as the leader of the chorus alone had to maintain the dialogue with the actor, it was necessary that this part of the play should be of no great length, in order that the leader might not be over-fatigued, and thus hindered in his duties as director of the chorus; for at first the chorus continued to be the chief element of the drama, as it had been of the dithyramb. The choric songs as well as the episodes were written by the poet. The works of Thespis were lost at an early period, and even the plays that passed as his in Alexandrian times (one of which was styled *Pentheus*) were the work of Heraclides Ponticus, a literary forger (*Aristox. apud Diog. Laërt.*, v. 92). When Horace says in his *Epist.* ii. 3, 275,—

“Ignotum Tragicæ genus inuenisse Camenæ  
Dicitur, et plaustis uexisse poemata Thespis,  
Quæ canerent agerentque peruncti fæcibus ora,” \*

the allusion to the wagons of Thespis is due to a confusion of the early tragedy with the custom which at a later date prevailed in the Anthesteria and Lenæa, that the festival-makers should go about in wagons, from

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\* Thespis, it is said, discovered and revealed the tragic style of poetry, and used wagons for conveyance of his works, sung and acted by performers, whose faces were painted with wine-lees.



which they saluted the passers by with ribald jests. On these occasions too it became usual to smear the face with the lees of wine.

It is said that Solon expressed disapproval of the innovations of Thespis, while Pisistratus encouraged the poet's efforts. It is certain that Thespis soon found imitators, and the new poetry enjoyed the unanimous approval of the Athenians. Pratinas of Phlius (*circa* ol. 70 = 496 B.C.) is credited with the invention of the satyric drama, in which a chorus of satyrs appeared with dances of a coarse and lively character (*σίκιννις*). It happened that at Phlius choruses of satyrs had long been used in the dithyramb; and Pratinas at Athens may have adapted the form of the recently developed tragedy to the art of his native place. It now became customary to conclude a number of tragedies with a satyric drama. This was of a brighter character, and also served, when the subjects of the scenic plays were taken from the whole field of Greek mythology, to lead back at the end of the day to Dionysus, the original patron of the festival, by means of the appearance of the *sileni* and the satyrs. The contrast between the grave gods and heroes of tragedy proper and these quarrelsome, sensual, and often clumsy creatures was well fitted to arouse feelings of mirth in the spectators. This did not do away with the deep impression made by the tragedies which had just been performed, but rather, by lessening the strain, heightened the enjoyment of

poetical masterpieces. This end however was not completely attained until the satyric drama came as a kind of fourth act to the trilogy of preceding tragedies. This was always the case with Æschylus. Suidas gives the number of pieces by Pratinas as fifty, of which thirty-two were satyric dramas. If the correctness of this estimate is allowed, we are compelled to assume that Pratinas had several satyric dramas played in succession, and that he aimed at giving an independent value to the form of drama which he had introduced. The Athenians however would only accept it as dependent and secondary; and this fact may serve to explain another statement, that Pratinas only once carried off the prize. From this we may draw the further conclusion, that competitions between writers of tragedy had become customary at an early date. The titles of only two plays by Pratinas are now known, the *Wrestlers* and the *Caryatides*. The former of these is expressly described as a satyric drama.

Pratinas was followed by his son Aristias. The titles of several of his plays have come down to us: *Antæus*, *Atalanta*, *Kērēs* (*Fates*) *Cyclops*, *Orpheus*, *Perseus*, and *Tantalus*; but of all these only a few unimportant lines have been preserved. All we know of Chœrilus, who lived as early as ol. 64 (= 520 B.C.), is that he dramatized the story of the Attic heroine Alope, a subject subsequently treated by Euripides. His style was distinguished by bold metaphors. Rocks and rivers

he termed the bones and veins of the earth. We can hardly credit the assertion of Suidas that he produced 160 dramas, and was victorious thirteen times. His satyric plays were for a long time highly esteemed.

Among the plays of Phrynichus were *The Egyptians*, *Alcestis*, *Antæus*, *The Danaids*, *The Women of Pleuron*, *Tantalus*, and *Troilus*. It is worthy of note that he took his subjects from contemporary history as well as from mythology. Thus he brought on the stage the capture of Miletus by the Persians (*Μιλήτου ἄλωσις*). At the performance the spectators burst into tears, and the poet was fined a thousand drachmas for reminding them of their country's misfortune. Further, a decree was passed that no one should produce this play<sup>1</sup> again (Herod. vi. 21). Phrynichus also celebrated the victory of Salamis in his *Phænissæ* (*Φοίνισσαι*), the mounting of which was paid for by Themistocles (ol. 75 = 478 B.C.). In this piece a chorus of Sidonian women in the palace of Susa lament the defeat of the Phœnician fleet. Long afterwards the Athenian citizens sang the sweet patriotic songs of Phrynichus (Arist., *Vesp.* 220, 269), and Aristophanes makes Agathon say of him and his plays in the *Thesmophoriazusæ* 164: "A fine person was he, and fine was ever his dress, and fine, to correspond, were his dramas; for what a man makes must be like what he is." Phrynichus won his first prize in 511 B.C., and at a later date competed with Æschylus. Like Æschylus he probably died in Sicily.

The true creator of tragedy was Æschylus, when he added a second actor to the first (δευτεραγωνιστής, πρωταγωνιστής). If by this means he did not create dramatic dialogue proper, at any rate he materially improved it, and still further subordinated the choric song to the dialogue in the tragedy.\* In this innovation he was followed by the other poets of his time. To the two actors of Æschylus, Sophocles added a third, but not before 469 B.C.; and he in his turn was imitated by Æschylus in his later pieces, first in the *Seven against Thebes* (ol. 78=464 B.C.), and again in the *Orestean trilogy*, though in Æschylus the practice was not carried very far. From this time three actors were regularly allotted to each poet for the public performance of his play. It was rare and exceptional for a fourth actor to be associated with them. In such cases the fourth actor would be a *parachoregema*; i.e. a special "extra" contributed on the part of the choragus, who supplied the funds. Such is *Ismene* in the *Œdipus at Colonus*, and the *Areopagites* who appear at the end of the *Eumenides* must be similarly regarded as an addition of this kind.<sup>2</sup> Comedy, like tragedy, was usually content with three actors.

Sophocles raised the number of the chorus also from

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\* Arist., *Poet.* cap. iv.: τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε, καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἡλάττωσε, καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστὴν παρεοκείασε.

twelve to fifteen, a number which is found in all his plays except the *Ajax*, in which it may be remarked that the tritagonist is not retained throughout. The first change almost required the second. For thus the three actors on the stage were faced by as many chorus leaders on the orchestra.<sup>3</sup> The coryphæus, or leader of the whole chorus, separated himself from the body of the chorus, which was divided into two semi-choruses of seven each, with a deuterostates and a tritostates respectively for leader. It must not be imagined that, even in earlier times, the chorus always sang together; they often divided themselves into semi-choruses, with three files, and four or five in each row; indeed often in an animated scene the whole fifteen or twelve members spoke separately one after another. Sophocles made the coryphæus in some degree an intermediary between actors and chorus, and often made him tread the boards alone, as in the first chorus of the *Philoctetes*. His part distinguishes him as entering more into the situation than the other members of the chorus; he more nearly approaches the status of an actor, and is more particularly associated with the protagonist, the hero of the piece. In the person of the coryphæus the office of the chorus receives its concrete, outward expression, and to him is allotted the part which the chorus takes in the action of the play. Thus Sophocles gave even the chorus dramatic life and action.<sup>4</sup> With him the music of the choric songs was a less prominent feature than

with Æschylus ; he paid especial attention to study of character, and even went so far as to write his parts with a view to the individuality of the actors who were to interpret them (πρὸς τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν ἔγραψε τὰ δράματα). In his hands the Greek drama reached its highest point of artistic perfection.

The *mise-en-scène* (σκευοποιία) which Æschylus used was partly his own invention and partly an adaptation of earlier methods. He was the first who took pains to provide a suitable costume for his actors, who, as a rule, appeared on the stage in the parts of heroes and gods. He made them wear a robe similar to that worn by the Eleusinian hierophants, bright in colour and richly embroidered, which came down to their ankles, with a train and distinctive mantles ; they appeared on the stage on raised shoes (ἄρβύλαι, ἐμβάδες), which were formed by fastening wooden supports under the cothurnus usually worn by the actor. Other artificial aids were not neglected : the κρώβυλος was a specially devised head-dress ; the σωματίον, προστερνίδια, and προγαστρίδια were used for filling out and rounding off the chest and figure ; the χειρίδες were large gloves for the hands. By means such as these he sought to convey the impression that they were of superhuman size and stature. In this the regular player's mask was a useful adjunct ; "it hid the familiar features of the actor, and thus prevented any unfitting curiosity on the part of the audience or any obtrusion of his personality

by the actor" (Bernhardy). The masks were changed according to the position and age of the characters represented. Naturally no attempt was made to represent individuals; but this did not exclude the use of special masks for such parts as those of the horned Actæon, the blind Phineus, Argus with his many eyes, or Achilles when, in his grief for Patroclus, he cut off his hair. After the time of Æschylus, Sophocles gave much attention to perfecting the decorative painting of the stage.

Aristotle thus defines tragedy, which was never in the future to suffer any material change from the form given it by Æschylus and Sophocles: *"Ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας, μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.*—*Poet. cap. vi.\**

Pity and fear are usually felt by men only through the personal experiences which bring these emotions into play. Tragedy, on the other hand, touches the purely imaginative and contemplative faculties. The poet's art enables the spectator to understand and realize

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\* Tragedy then is an imitation of some action complete in itself, and having some greatness and importance, which, by means of attractive language, not narrative, but adapted to the several characters performing the different portions of it, effects through pity and fear the purgative discharge of such emotions.



another's suffering ; it brings into clear relief its deeper consequences, whether in connexion with the individual misfortunes of the hero, or with the unending and ever-present struggle of mankind against Fate. The mind of the listener is filled with pity and fear ; but these emotions are now due, not to regard for self, but to higher and wider sympathies : they are, as it were, cleansed from those elements of the subordinate and the adventitious which are commonly attached to them. Such perhaps may be the meaning of Aristotle's *κάθαρσις*,—a word which has of late given rise to considerable discussion.<sup>5</sup>

The development of the action of the drama went on simultaneously with that of the chorus. These twin elements—dramatic and lyric—were bound together, in the best work of ancient tragedy, like body and soul. The chorus was not just an actor taking a part with the others, but served as a support to the regular actors, and had a certain direct interest in the action. What its duties were Horace well expresses<sup>6</sup> in the following lines (Epist. ii. 3, 193–201) :

“ Actoris partes chorus officiumque virile  
 Defendat : neu quid medios intercinat actus,  
 Quod non proposito conducat, et hæreat apte.  
 Ille bonis faveatque, et concilietur amice,  
 Et regat iratos, et amet pacare tumentes :  
 Ille dapes laudet mensæ brevis ; ille salubrem  
 Iustitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis :



Ille tegat commissa; deosque precetur et oret,  
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis."\*

The chorus was, in fact, an ideal audience, of the time and people from which the characters of the piece were taken. They expressed by their words and actions the impression which the various incidents of the play would have made on actual spectators of the events.

An entire tragedy therefore may be divided into two parts: one dramatic, and the other lyrical or choric. The metre employed in the dramatic part was for the most part the iambic trimeter,<sup>7</sup> a stately measure. The rhythms of the chorus are various. The Attic dialect was used, mixed in the choruses to a certain extent with Doric forms.<sup>8</sup> As to the musical composition of the choric odes, or the dances that accompanied them, we can now offer no opinion. Broadly speaking, all we know is, that the tragic dance-measure, called *ἐμμέλεια*, was distinguished by its greater propriety and repose from the livelier dances of the satyric

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\* The chorus, like the other personages, should take a vigorous part in the action, and must never, in the songs between the scenes, introduce anything irrelevant and unsuitable to the purpose of the drama. They should support the better side with friendly advice, should direct indignation, and be ready to console grief. They should praise simple living and the beneficial rule of right, should extol law and peace and rest with open gates. The chorus should be a trusty keeper of secrets, and their prayer should be that fortune may turn from the arrogant to the oppressed.

plays (σίκιννις), and the farcical dance of comedy (κόρδαξ).

A tragedy, according to Aristotle (*Poet.*, cap. xii.: he has in view the Euripidean and post-Euripidean period), has four essential parts (as also has comedy); πρόλογος, ἐπεισόδιον, ἔξοδος, χορικόν. The last is either a πάροδος or στάσιμον. There are besides two lyrical parts, the κομμός and the ἀπὸ σκηνῆς, which are not found in comedy. The prologue extends from the beginning of the play to the first entrance of the chorus. In the earlier periods it was sometimes missing altogether, as for instance in the *Persians* and *Suppliants* of Æschylus. The episode is the part which comes between two great choral odes. In Æschylus there are regularly three episodes. The *parodos* is the first entrance of the chorus. The *stasimon* is a choric ode which follows an episode. The *exodos*, according to Aristotle, is the part of the play which is not followed by a choric ode. According to the same authority, the *kommos* is a dirge, in which both chorus and singers on the stage take part (θρῆνος κοῖνος χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς). The word is connected with κόπτεσθαι, and originally means a mourning song in which the breast is beaten. Every tragedy of Æschylus in which the subject makes it admissible has one such dirge, usually at the end of the play, but in the *Choephori* it comes in an episode. These dirges, in which the actors respond to each other, like semi-

choruses, are in Æschylus even more fully and more artistically developed than the choric odes proper. Of the latter, each of his dramas contains four, each of a considerable length, and extending to as many as sixteen strophes. In the *Persians* and the *Seven against Thebes* the dirge forms the *exodos*, and it is found in the *exodos* of the *Agamemnon*. It is wanting in the *Suppliants* and *Eumenides*; but in its place there is another lyrical part. The performers ἀπὸ σκηνῆς were singers of solos on the stage. With the exception of the lyrical parts in the *Prometheus*, which were certainly retouched later, Æschylus does not introduce them. In later tragedies however they were very strongly represented, while at the same time the choruses proper were much contracted. In the later tragic writers, besides the great choric odes, smaller lyrics are found in the episodes and even in the prologue.

The internal arrangement of an Æschylean ode is worthy of notice. The leading idea of the chorus is placed in the middle without regard to the arrangement of strophe and antistrophe. Round this central point, *C*, the other parts are arranged in such a way that the part which immediately precedes, *B*, is parallel in idea with that which follows, *D*; and further, the part which precedes *B*, which we may call *A*, corresponds with *E*, the part following *D*. This symmetrical arrangement is an echo of the form used in the *nomos* of the musician Terpander (five parts, with a prelude and epilogue).

The theatre at Athens was at first nothing more than a wooden erection of seats put up in the Lenæum. At a performance given in ol. 70 (496 B.C.), these seats collapsed, and a permanent theatre, doubtless very simple, was arranged on the southern slope of the Acropolis, where advantage was taken of the surface rock. A regular stage-building was probably erected for the first time in the rebuilding of the town after the Persian Wars.<sup>9</sup> But the theatre was not completely finished and decorated until long after, in the administration of Lycurgus (ol. 110=336 B.C.). This is the theatre which Dicæarchus in his *βίος Ἑλλάδος* declares to be the finest in the world. It formed a great semicircle, and consisted of (1) the *θέατρον* proper, an amphitheatre for the spectators, rising tier above tier, with accommodation for twenty or thirty thousand people; (2), the orchestra, in the middle of which was the *thymele*, or altar of Dionysus; and (3) the *scena* or stage, directly opposite the auditorium. The orchestra was the original part, and the earliest in point of time. Originally dramatic performances were not a spectacle, but a festal-play performed in the *ὀρχήστρα* or dancing-place, by and in the name of the whole people, in honour of the god. Soon, with the rapid growth of the art of music, the orchestra was given up to the chorus, which was formed exclusively of trained artists, from whom the spectators were separated. Afterwards the stage was separated

from the orchestra. At first a simple table, originally meant for the slaughter and preparation of the sacrificial victims, was used by one of the chorus as a place from which to make an extempore speech, or to take part in a dialogue with the chorus.. Later on, when the chorus was confronted by regular actors, this board gave place to a special scaffolding, *λογεῖον*, from which the actors spoke, erected at the back of the orchestra. In the background was a tent, *σκηνή*, from which they entered. Gradually the tent gave place to a house, and the name *σκηνή* was extended to cover the whole of that part of the theatre which was assigned to the actors. Before the erection of a house at the back of the stage, which was, at the latest, in the time of Æschylus, they used a movable painted wall at a suitable distance from the stage, which formed an appropriate background to the piece in representation. This wall was called a *proscenium* (*προσκήνιον*), although the same term was afterwards used for the space in front of the stage. The *proscenium* usually represented a palace with three doors, the king entering from the one in the centre. But this was by no means invariably the case; for in the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, the background represented the barren rocks of the Caucasus, and in the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles the cavern of the hero. The painted wall was movable (*scaena ductilis*, Serv. ad Verg. *Georg.* iii. 24), and it could therefore (*tractis tabulatis*) easily be made

to show the audience the interior of the house which lay behind. On these occasions the inner floor was pushed into the foreground by special machinery for the purpose, the *eccyclema*. On each side of the front of the stage were prism-shaped, revolving side-scenes or wings (*περίακτοι*, *scaena versilis*), by means of which the appearance of the stage might be varied, either with or without a change in the background. Such a change may be found, for instance, in the *Eumenides* of Æschylus, where the scene represents first the temple of Delphi, and afterwards the temple of Athena at Athens.<sup>10</sup> Between these wings and the background room was left for the entrance and exit of the actors, on those occasions when they did not enter from the back of the stage; these entrances were called *ἄνω πάροδοι*. They entered on the right when they were supposed to come from the town or its neighbourhood, and on the left when coming from a distance. The two spaces lying at the back of the stage on each side—perhaps dressing-rooms for the actors, or property rooms—were called *παρασκήνια* (*Dem. Mid.*, p. 520, F.), though this term was originally applied to the *ἄνω πάροδοι*. The stage proper, the *proscenium* in the wider use of the word, is more accurately termed the *λογεῖον*,—the place from which the actors spoke. The front part of the stage, which faced the spectators, was called the *ὑποσκήνιον*. It could be ornamented with little pillars and statues.

The word *ὑποσκήνιον* is also used for the space behind the stage. The orchestra lay ten to twelve feet below the stage,<sup>11</sup> whence the entrances of the chorus from the sides were called *αἱ κάτω πάροδοι*. Right and left was a flight of steps leading from the orchestra to the stage. Though the actors never had to go into or return from the orchestra, it often happened, at least in the earlier days of tragedy, that the chorus left the orchestra for the stage. In the centre of the orchestra stood originally an altar called the *θυμέλη*. Later, the altar disappeared, and its place was taken by a kind of platform (*βῆμα*), to which the name *θυμέλη* was also applied.<sup>12</sup> This was raised by a few steps above the level of the orchestra (*κονίστρα*), and probably extended as far back as the stage, or, more strictly speaking, to the *ὑποσκήνιον*. On this thymele (in its later form) were held the dances of the chorus, arranged in a four-sided figure. The orchestra had no special decoration. The burial-mounds or altars of special divinities required in particular plays were all placed on the stage. Finally, the curtain was unknown in a Greek theatre. We have no knowledge of the special stage machinery, by which, for example, thunder and lightning were produced, or characters appeared and disappeared through the air, or of sinking machines and the like. There were such, but we know only their names.

As has been already mentioned, on the days set



apart for representations at the two great Dionysiac feasts, and sometimes, though exceptionally, at other festivals, contests were held at which each dramatist exhibited four plays. It is a mere accident that we are not told the names of four plays given at the same time by Sophocles. We know of such groups by Euripides, some of them exhibited on occasions when he was defeated by Sophocles. When the four plays of which the last was usually, though not invariably, a satyric drama, referred to the same cycle of events, and therefore formed a connected whole, the four were termed a tetralogy. This became a trilogy<sup>13</sup> when the satyric play was left out of view. Æschylus produced tetralogies only, and we possess in the *Oresteia* the trilogy belonging to one theme. Sophocles however did away with this dramatic sequence, and his example was followed by Euripides. We cannot tell whether Æschylus found the tetralogy already in use, or whether he was the first to introduce it. The three plays which form an Æschylean trilogy are, in fact, nothing more than three connected scenes of one great drama, except that each contains in itself a complete and finished action. The production and mounting of the play, the *choragia*, was regarded as a service to the State (*λειτουργία*), which the rich had to undertake in turn, though sometimes it was voluntarily offered. After the Sicilian expedition (ol. 92, 1 = 412 B.C.), a popular vote authorized the dividing of the



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duty between two *choragi* (*Arist. in Schol. Ar. Ran.* 406). As the wealth of the Athenians diminished, it was undertaken by the State, and finally abolished altogether. The jury who awarded the prize were five in number. The council previously selected candidates from among whom, when the time of performance came, the archon, in the presence of the public, made a final choice by lot. They were responsible for their verdict, and pledged themselves faithfully to give their decision, truly and without favour, on the merits of the plays. The prize was a wreath and a tripod, which the victor usually placed, with an inscription recording his victory, in the temple of Dionysus, or on monuments specially erected for the purpose in the Street of Tripods.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GREAT TRAGEDIANS : ÆSCHYLUS.

“The tragic triad of immortal fames,  
Aischulos, Sophokles, Euripides.”

—*Balaustion's Adventure.*

IN tragedy, as in lyrical poetry, there were three poets who carried off the prize against many competitors—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, all three belonging to the same period, although not equal in age. As Lessing reminds us, “the fortunate isle of Salamis saw the three poets united together on the very day of victory: Æschylus fighting against his country's foes, the young Sophocles dancing round the trophies, on the day and in the island where Euripides was born.” There is a trustworthy tradition that Sophocles, then a stripling of fifteen years of age, was chosen to lead the chorus of boys who raised the song of victory after the battle of Salamis. There is also no doubt that Euripides was born in the same year. But the artistic sense of later writers must be held responsible for the attribution of this event to Salamis, and to the day of the battle.

Æschylus was the son of Euphorion of Eleusis, near

Athens, a scion of the Eupatrid family, and was born in ol. 63, 4 (525 B.C.). At the battle of Marathon he fought for the freedom of Greece along with his brother Cynægirus, who there found a hero's death (Herod. vi. 114). He also took part in the battles which followed at Artemisium, Salamis, and Plataea. In his early youth, so the tale runs, he had composed tragedies; but he only gained his first prize in ol. 73, 4 (485 B.C.). In poetical, dramatic, and choric art he far outdid his predecessors. He it was who first piled solemn phrase on phrase, and decked out tragedy with magnificence, as Aristophanes says of him (*Ran.* 1004), and so may truly be considered the father of tragedy. In ol. 77, 4 (468 B.C.) the young Sophocles, at his very first attempt, defeated him. But in the following year he regained his position with the tetralogy of which the *Seven against Thebes* formed part; and thenceforth his reputation remained unblemished. For some time he lived in Sicily. As early as the year ol. 76, 1 (476 B.C.) he brought out at Syracuse his *Women of Etna* (*Αἰτναῖαι*) to celebrate the foundation of the city of Etna by Hiero on the site of the old Catana. In this play he prophesied a happy life for the dwellers in the new town. By the king's wish he also had the *Persians* played again at Syracuse. After the production of the Orestean trilogy in ol. 80, 2 (458 B.C.) he went to Gela, and there died, after a three years' residence, in the year 456 B.C., at the age of sixty-nine.

Many reasons have been handed down to us to account for his sojourn in Sicily. It is possible that the political condition of Athens, and the increasing growth of democratic feeling, may have induced him, though in his evening of life, to quit his native town. Even in the diction the ancients found much that was due to his long residence in Sicily. Perhaps to this may be also attributed his liking for a certain class of metaphors, drawn from sea and fishing life. The tale that is told of the strange manner of his death may perhaps rest on a jest of the comic writers, or perhaps on a misconception of an allegorical picture. An eagle—it is said—had carried off a tortoise, and not being able to pierce the hard shell, let it fall on what it took for a rock. It fell on the bald head of the poet, who happened to be in an open field, and killed him; thus fulfilling the saying of the oracle, “A blow from heaven shall slay thee.” The people of Gela gave him a splendid funeral, and placed on his monument two distichs which he is said to have himself composed :

Αἰσχύλον Εὐφορίωνος Ἀθηναῖον τόδε κεύθει,  
 μνῆμα καταφθίμενον πυροφόροιο Γέλας.  
 ἀλκὴν δ' εὐδόκιμον Μαραθῶνιον ἄλσος ἂν εἴποι  
 καὶ βαθυχαιτήεις Μῆδος ἐπιστάμενος.\*

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\* This tomb the dust of Æschylus doth hide,  
 Euphorion's son, and fruitful Gela's pride;  
 How tried his valour Marathon may tell,  
 And long-haired Medes, who knew it all too well.

It is characteristic of the poet, and tends to prove the genuineness of the verses, that he referred rather to what he had done for his country in battle than to his poetical achievements. He was greatly honoured by the Athenians also after his death, and a popular decree was passed assigning, without restriction, a chorus to any of his plays at future representations. So, in fact, several of his plays were produced, with considerable alterations, after his death, and carried off the prize. Later on, at the instance of the orator Lysurgus, bronze statues of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were erected in the theatre, and, with the view of preventing any unauthorized interpolation, the tragedies of these three master-minds were collected in a standard edition. Of the completeness and critical character of this we must not form too high an opinion. This, so to speak, official copy afterwards found its way into the Library of Alexandria. Ptolemy Philadelphus, after depositing a sum of money as security, had borrowed it from Athens in order to have a copy made; but he sent the Athenians the copy, and kept the original. Suidas gives the number of Æschylus' plays as ninety. The titles of eighty-two are actually known to us, and among these are relatively few satyric dramas.

The poetry of Æschylus is a true picture of his time. His works breathe a strong, manly spirit. His tragedies are quite devoid of any artistic development of plot; their construction is in the highest degree

simple, without elaboration of incident or dramatic *dénoûment*; they are rather sketches in bold outline than finished works of art. The characters are indicated rather by a few well-marked features than by any careful detailed treatment, resembling in this respect the plastic art of his time. In his language he affects a sustained pomp of sonorous words, an accumulation of epithets, and a wealth of metaphor and imagery. In a word, like Pindar, a contemporary and kindred spirit, he uses all that can serve to express the solemn grandeur and imposing majesty of heroic life. Whatever, as he thinks, he cannot properly express by words, he gives more powerfully by silence. In his *Niobe*, the mother sat veiled on the grave of her children, and there remained, silent, during the whole of the play. In his *Ransoming of Hector*, Achilles, after a short dialogue with Hermes at the beginning, sat dumb to the end of the piece. In the first scene of the *Prometheus Bound*, while Prometheus is being chained to the rock, and mocked at by the myrmidons of Zeus, he allows no word of pain or murmuring to escape him. Æschylus never deigns to move his audience to tears by exciting an unmanly feeling of pity; his heroes bear their suffering with calm and dignity, and move, not our tears, but our admiration.

The laws of metrical form are more strictly observed by Æschylus than by any other poet. The choruses, though not so long as they were, form still a large

part of the play. His rhythms are resonant and majestic. The iambic trimeter, the metre of dialogue, is constructed with special grandeur.

The faith of Æschylus in the Greek divinities was as strong as that of Pindar. We see in his plays an attempt to reconcile the two antagonistic conceptions of divine power that existed in the Greek mind. The stern law of the blind necessity of nature, which is personified in the Titans, is mitigated by the independent freewill of the Olympian deities; while above both stands Zeus Soter, directing all things to a good issue, for the consummation of which some god or hero makes atonement. So in the Orestean trilogy Apollo and Athena rescue Orestes from the clutches of the Furies, whom they appease; so in the Promethean trilogy Heracles is commissioned by Zeus to free the Titan from his bonds and still the ancient strife. This view of religion is due to a conviction, which many thoughtful men have shared with Æschylus, that the contradictions and discords of nature and morality will finally be resolved into harmonies by some invisible and omnipotent Power.

Later authorities, such as Heraclides Ponticus, Ælian, and others, tell us that Æschylus was accused of revealing the Eleusinian mysteries in one of his plays. The *Eumenides* was supposed to have been the one, as it abounds in dangerous references to religious subjects. They add that the indignation of the public was roused

to such an extent, that there was a danger of Æschylus being killed in the theatre, and that he was compelled to defend himself against a charge of impiety (ἀσέβεια) before the Areopagus. It is said that his services to the State at Marathon were urged in extenuation of his crime. But it is probable that these assertions are due to the rhetorical exaggeration of some unimportant circumstance, the true import of which we are no longer in a position to estimate.\*

The political feeling of the poet, which is clearly indicated in his plays, is essentially patriotic. In the *Persians* he presented his fellow countrymen with a most splendid memorial of their courage in defence of freedom. None of his plays is without allusions to contemporary events. His political sympathies seem to be rather with the aristocracy, to which he belonged by birth, than with the democracy, which, even in his day, was inclined to be overbearing. Thus in the *Persians* he praises the aristocratic Aristides, doubtless in contrast with the democratic Themistocles. To Aristides again obviously refers the allusion in the *Seven against Thebes*, where he praises Amphiaraus (l. 592) :

“He wishes to be just, and not to seem,  
Reaping full harvest from his soul’s deep furrows,  
Whence ever new and noble counsels spring.”

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\* Aristotle illustrates his assertion (*Eth. Nicom.* iii. 2), that a man might break the law quite unconsciously, by the curt allusion, ὥσπερ Αἰσχύλος τὰ μυστικά.



And in the *Eumenides* his intention is clearly to urge on the Athenians the preservation of the Areopagus, that venerable court, which the democratic party mutilated in order that they might transfer its power to the popular assembly. There are many other political allusions scattered through his plays. He never loses an opportunity of warning the people to be moderate in using their freedom, and to avoid any kind of blustering or tyranny. Well might Aristophanes in the *Frogs* make him the representative of the poetry of the good old times, "which only taught the good, the true," as distinguished from the polished versification of his own day, which was represented by the rhetorical sophist Euripides.

In the older period of tragedy, which Æschylus represents, the trilogy, as we have already remarked, formed a complete connected poem. The tragedies either embrace a complete cycle of myths, like the *Orestea*, the *Promethea*, the *Lycurgea*, the *Ædipodea*, and others, or else they are different legends united by a connexion which is partly ethical and partly mythical. To the latter class probably belongs the trilogy of which the *Persians* forms part, *Phineus*, *The Persians*, *Glaucus*. This triple arrangement of tragedies recalls the epic treatment of mythology, on which the tragic writers drew; thus Æschylus himself called his tragedies "crumbs from the great banquet of Homer." To draw a comparison from a sister art,

the Æschylean trilogy is like a group composed of statues on separate pedestals. Sophocles stripped off this epic clothing, and each of his tragedies is in itself a complete, artistic whole, like a statue by Phidias, his contemporary. The satyric plays, which followed the trilogies of Æschylus, were certainly not without some connexion with them.

Of the seven tragedies of Æschylus which have come down to us, three, the *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi* (*Mourning Women*), and *Eumenides*, form a complete trilogy, the *Orestea*; the *Seven against Thebes* is the final play of a trilogy dealing with the fate of Thebes; the *Persians* and also the *Prometheus*\* are middle plays; and the *Suppliant Women* in all probability the first play of a trilogy.

### “THE PERSIANS.”

The oldest play of the poet which we possess is the *Persians*, “glorifying the victory and most noble deed” (Aristoph.), which was produced seven years after the

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\* According to R. Westphal the Προμήθευς Δεσμώτης is the first play in the trilogy, the Λύομενος the middle, and the Πυρφόρος the last. (The word πυρφόρος here does not mean the fire-robber, but the fire-bringing Prometheus, who bestows the blessing of fire.) But the Προμήθευς πυρφόρος is traditionally ascribed to the Persian trilogy. It is hardly advisable to accept the suggestion that there is a confusion between the Πυρφόρος and Πυρκαεύς. It is not certain that the latter title is descriptive of a separate play at all.

battle of Salamis, in ol. 76, 4 (473 B.C.). Phrynichus, as has been already said, had used the same subject in his *Phœnissæ*, which was produced in ol. 75, 3 (478 B.C.); but his treatment was so different, that Æschylus might well venture to develop the subject a little further.

The scene is laid at the grave of Darius, and the play opens with the entrance of the chorus. This is composed of aged Persians, who were called "the Faithful", guardians of rich treasures of gold. They have been left behind by Xerxes on account of their age, in charge of his country. Their minds are filled with sad forebodings.

"Forth they sped upon the journey,  
Some in ships and some on horses,  
Some on foot, still onward marching,  
In their close array presenting  
Squadrons duly armed for battle.

. . . . .  
At the Great King's dread commandment,  
These, the bloom of Persia's greatness,  
Now are gone forth to the battle ;  
And for these, their mother country,  
Asia, mourns with mighty yearning ;  
Wives and mothers faint with trembling  
Through the hours that slowly linger,  
Counting each day as it passes."

Already the Persian host has thrown a bridge across the sea, and reached the coast of Greece: the king, as it were some fiery-eyed dragon, with countless

men and ships, leads his famous spearmen to the field of battle. Nothing can stand against the mighty human tide ; invincible is the Persian host, and full of courage their hearts. But yet what mortal man can escape the craft of heaven, which lures him on and leads him into the toils of destruction, whence none who is but mortal may escape ? Of old Fate gave to the Persians might and victory ; yet fear seizes the heart that this pre-eminence may pass. Like a swarm of bees has the people's might with their leaders passed over-seas, and the Persian women bedew their lonely couches in grief for husbands gone, for they have sent their brave husbands, mighty spearmen, forth to battle ; and the band of the Faithful is anxious for the fate of the king and his host.

Atossa enters, the wife of Darius, and aged mother of Xerxes. The chorus greet her respectfully, and she, grief-stricken, seeks the counsel of her faithful servants.

“ Ever with many visions of the night  
Am I encompassed, since my son went forth,  
Leading a mighty host, with aim to sack  
The land of the Ionians. But ne'er yet  
Have I beheld a dream so manifest  
As in the night just past. And this I'll tell thee.  
There stood by me two women in fair robes ;  
And this in Persian garments was arrayed,  
And that in Dorian came before mine eyes ;  
In stature both of tallest, comeliest size ;  
And both of faultless beauty, sisters twain

Of the same stock. And they twain had their homes,  
One in the Hellenic, one in alien land.  
And these two, as I dreamt I saw, were set  
At variance with each other. And my son  
Learnt it, and checked and mollified their wrath,  
And yokes them to his chariot, and his collar  
He places on their necks. And one was proud  
Of that equipment, and in harness gave  
Her mouth obedient ; but the other kicked,  
And tears the chariot's trappings with her hands,  
And rushes off uncurbed, and breaks its yoke  
Asunder. And my son falls low, and then  
His father comes, Darius, pitying him.  
And, lo ! when Xerxes sees him, he his clothes  
Rends round his limbs.

“Such was my dream. When I rose I hastened to  
the altar to pray the gods to avert this. There saw  
I an eagle in full flight to Phœbus' altar-hearth,  
and then a kite flew at him, and tare with his claws  
the eagle's head, which did naught but crouch and  
yield his life.”

The chorus recommend her not to give way too  
much to fear, and at the same time not to be too  
secure, but to propitiate the gods with prayer and  
offerings, and, above all, to pray her husband Darius  
to send out to the light fortune for her and her son,  
and to hide misfortune in the darkness of earth.

Atossa thanks them for their advice, and again asks  
for news from Athens. “Where in the world do  
men report it standeth?”

*Chorus.* Far to the west, where sets our king the sun-god.

*Atossa.* Was it this city my son wished to capture?

*Chorus.* Aye; then would Hellas to our king be subject.

*Atossa.* And have they any multitude of soldiers?

*Chorus.* A mighty host, that wrought the Medes much mischief.

*Atossa.* And what besides? Have they too wealth sufficing?

*Chorus.* A fount of silver have they, their land's treasure.

*Atossa.* Have they a host in archer's skill excelling?

*Chorus.* Not so; they wield the spear and shield and buckler.

*Atossa.* What shepherd rules and lords it o'er their people?

*Chorus.* Of no man are they called the slaves or subjects.

*Atossa.* How then can they sustain a foe invading?

*Chorus.* So that they spoiled Darius' goodly army."

A messenger enters with tidings:

"How at one stroke is brought to nothingness  
Our great prosperity, and all the flower,  
Of Persia's strength is fallen! Woe is me!  
All our barbaric mighty host is lost!"

He is asked for details, and tells them:

"The coasts of Salamis and all the neighbouring shore are full of the dead, slain foully; yet Xerxes lives, and sees the sun's fair face, though many leaders are fallen. The author of the mischief was an Hellene, who came to Xerxes from the Athenian host, and said that in the darkness of the night the Greeks would mount their ships and save themselves by a stealthy flight. The king knew not his guile nor the gods' wrath, and bade his captains hinder all escape, and place their ships round the isle of Ajax

that none might pass them. And they observed his word, and when night came went each to his appointed post. So the night passed. None of the Greek host had fled, but when they saw the rising of the sun upraised loud cry of battle, that made the island-rock re-echo with the sound, and chilled the Persians' hearts. Not in flight they sang, but as a holy pæan, such as gives brave spirit for the fight. Then with the trumpets' blast and sweep of oars, first in order moved the right wing, followed close by the whole line. And we heard them cry :

“ ‘O sons of Hellenes, forward; free your country;  
Free too your wives, your children, and the shrines  
Built to your fathers' gods, and holy tombs  
Your ancestors now rest in! Now the fight  
Is for our all!’

“First a barque of Hellas begins the fight, and carries away a Phœnician's prow. Ship drives against ship. The Persian vessels, crowded near together, could lend one another no help, but rather crushed each other with their prows; while the Greeks charged circling round them. And the sea was strewn with floating hulls, and the shores and rocks with corpses. In wild confusion the Persians fled away, while they with shafts of oars and broken planks kept smiting, as fishers at a draught of fishes. The whole sea resounds with bitter groans and wailings, till at last dark night makes the slaughter to cease.

“And for the mass of ills,  
Not, though my tale should run for ten full days,  
Could I in full recount them. Be assured  
That never yet so great a multitude  
Died in a single day as died in this.”

Here the messenger tells how it fared with those whom Xerxes had drawn up on the island that lies off Salamis, that they might with ease slay the enemy as they swam ashore from their wrecked ships, and at the same time give a refuge to their friends in case of need. “From their ships leaped the Greek warriors to the shore, encircling the whole isle, hurling stones at some, and others slaying with arrows. At last, advancing in one great rush, they smote them, till not one was left alive. And Xerxes too, when, from his lofty seat on the shore, he saw how wide the ruin was, rent his clothes with bitter cries, and turned to fly. Like mishaps attended all that escaped to land; for many died of thirst and hunger, weariness and frost, and only a small number reached their homes again.

“Too true my tale,  
And many things I from my speech omit,  
Ills which the Persians suffer at god’s hand.”

Atossa recognises how only too full of meaning her dream had been. She bids them make sacrifice and prayer to ward off, if not past misfortunes, yet those that may come. The faithful servant must prove himself so by faithful counsel, and, should her son come,



they are to speak to him words of comfort, and lead him to the house, that no fresh ill may come upon those they now suffer.

The queen enters the palace. The chorus lament the loss of the Persian might, and picture the grief of the women over their fallen husbands.

“Sore mourneth all the land of Asia; for Xerxes in his recklessness trusted all to ships, and Darius is gone, their country’s guard and Susa’s well-loved lord. Gnawed by the dumb fishes are they whom each mourning house has lost, and for whom their gray sires sorrow. Low is Persia’s might, low their monarch’s power. Freely may the people speak, for the yoke of their tongues is broken. On the blood-stained, sea-washed isle of Ajax lies the might of Persia.”

The queen re-enters in mourning garb with sacrificial offerings to Darius. She bids the chorus, while she is offering the sacrifice, call up the spirit of Darius by their song.

As the chorus take up the song of incantation, the shade of Darius appears. He asks what misfortune the State has suffered, why does his wife linger there at his grave in sorrow, and why had the old men called him up with cries of lamentation. They do not dare to tell the disastrous tidings to their imperial master, so turning to Atossa, Darius hears from her the story of the downfall of the Persian might, of the

destruction of her great host near Athens ; how Xerxes had bridged the Hellespont and led them into Greece, and how he had lost fleet and army.

Darius breaks forth into lamentation :

“Ah me! too swift the oracle’s fulfilment! The wrong is done by Xerxes’ over-boldness, who, taking no thought of Poseidon, chained the sacred Hellespont with fetters. Never more may ye attack the Hellenes’ land, for even the host that now stays on Hellas’ shores will never see fair fortune of return. There, where Asopus pours his stream and makes fertile the Bœotian land, the penalty of godless thoughts awaits them ; for they have plundered shrines of the gods, and burnt their temples, laid low their altars, and dragged down their sculptured images to the dust. By Dorian spears their blood shall flow upon Plataean soil, and piles of corpses show their sons the end of mortals’ pride.”

So let them, as a warning, remember Hellas and Athens ; for Zeus is an avenger of too boastful thoughts, and sternly does he judge.

“And thou, O Xerxes’ mother, old and dear,  
Go to thy home, and taking what apparel  
Is fitting, go to meet thy son ; for all  
The costly robes around his limbs are torn  
To rags and shreds in grief’s wild agony.  
But do thou gently soothe his soul with words,  
For he to thee alone will deign to hearken ;  
But I must leave the earth for darkness deep.

And ye, old men, farewell, although in woe,  
And give your soul its daily bread of joy ;  
For to the dead no profit bringeth wealth."

Darius disappears, and Atossa enters the palace to prepare for the coming of her son. The chorus praise the happy days of old under Darius, and lament their present fate, cast down by calamities of war and the cruel ocean waves.

Hereupon enters Xerxes, bewailing his misfortunes, and wishing that he too might have shared the death which overtook his soldiers. The chorus take part in his lament, and the play ends with a long dirge spoken by Xerxes and the chorus, to which the Greeks in the theatre must have listened with delight. The play is remarkable for its presentment of Darius, which is altogether unhistorical ; for it makes him appear as in every respect a wise and thoughtful prince.

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"THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES."

The *Septem contra Thebas* (Ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβας) is a piece, as Aristophanes says (*Ran.* 1002), "full of the spirit of war, so that every man who saw it must have longed to become a warrior."

It was produced after the *Persians* in ol. 78, 1 (467 B.C.), one year before the death of Aristides. It is said that all the spectators looked at him when the passage came in which Amphiaraus is praised as a man who

wishes to be truly just, and not merely to seem so. This piece was originally the concluding tragedy of the trilogy, *Laius*, *Ædipus*, and the *Seven against Thebes*, which was followed by a satyric play called the *Sphinx*. These facts are beyond doubt, and have come down to us in an extract from the *didascalie*<sup>14</sup> of early date in the Medicean MS.

The scene of the play<sup>15</sup> is laid in an open place within the Cadmea, the citadel of Thebes, surrounded by the temples and statues of the Theban tutelary deities. Eteocles has assembled the citizens to tell them what the time requires :

“It behoves him who guides the ship of State to keep open his eyes. For if the State prospers, the gods get all the praise ; but disaster falls on his head alone who rules. And thus 'tis meet that all, as best each can, should defend the State, the altars of their gods, their sons, and the home they live in. So far the gods have proved gracious ; but now the seer says the enemy are resolved this very morn to storm the town. Therefore hasten, O citizens, a well-armed host, to all the walls and gateways ; and with good cheer await their onset, nor fear the attacking aliens. For the gods will bring all things to good issue.”

A messenger announces that he has seen seven captains, brave warriors, slay a bull over a dark shield ; and, dipping their hands into its blood, they

vowed by the gods of war to bring destruction on the town. To each by lot was given a station at one of the city's gates. Let Eteocles now send citizens against them, for already appears the dust of the enemy's advance.

Then Eteocles prays his country's gods that they may ever keep in safety a town which speaks the tongue of Hellas, and may preserve a free country, the citadel of Cadmus, from passing underneath the yoke of bondage.

"A prosperous city honours well the gods.

He hurries away, and the chorus of Theban maidens enter, in wild terror uttering cries of woe to the images of the gods.

"An army leaves its camp and is let loose :  
Hither the vanguard of the horsemen flows,  
And the thick cloud of dust,  
That suddenly is seen,  
Dumb herald, yet full clear,  
Constrains me to believe ;  
And smitten with the horses' hoofs, the plain  
Of this my country rings with noise of war ;  
It floats and echoes round,  
Like voice of mountain torrent dashing down,  
Resistless in its might."

Weeping they approach the gods :

"O Ares, ancient guardian of our land !  
What wilt thou do? Wilt thou betray thy land?  
O god of golden casque,

Look on our city, yea, with favour look,  
The city thou didst love.  
And ye, ye gods, who o'er the city rule,  
Come all of you, come all."

Eteocles then returns, blaming the women for weakening the courage of the men by their cries. "Hearing the strange din of war," they urge in excuse, "to the gods' shelter terrified we come. But since it is thy will, we will be silent, and await our fate."

But after the departure of Eteocles their lament begins afresh :

"My heart is full of care, and knows no rest, just as a trembling dove fears the snake that comes upon her young. For already march the enemy upon our towers, already on our men hurl shower of stones. But save, save, ye gods, the city and people of Cadmus ! What better land can ye obtain in place of this rich and fertile clime and sweet waters of Dirce ? Therefore send on the enemy without our walls such woe as takes men's lives and makes them lose their shields ; but for our countrymen gain glory, and appear as saviours of the city, listening to our cry of woe.

"For sad it were to hurl to Hades dark  
A city of old fame,  
The spoil and prey of war,  
With foulest shame in dust and ashes laid,  
By an Achæan foe at god's decree ;  
And that our women, old and young alike,  
Be dragged away, ah me !

Like horses, by their hair,  
Their robes torn off from them.  
And, lo, the city wails, made desolate,  
While with confused cry  
The wretched prisoners meet doom worse than death.  
Ah ! at this grievous fate  
I shudder ere it comes.

“Sad too for those whose youth is fresh to take a hateful journey from their homes! Better death than such a fate! For it is ill with a city surrendered to an enemy. Murder, ravage, and flames, which Ares fans, defile its sanctuaries. The yell of war is heard within the town, hemmed in its net of towers. Man falls by spear of man; the babe is butchered at its mother's breast. Rapine runs riot through the streets; spoiler meets with spoiler, and the empty-handed calls his fellow to his share of gain. Fruit of all kinds is cast wildly on the ground, sad sight to a careful housewife! and many gifts of earth flow uselessly away. We maidens trembling wait our cruel fate, and hope that soon may come the night of death, to take us from our sorrow fraught with tears.”

Eteocles returns with a scout, who tells him how the distribution of the gates fell to each hero respectively :

“At Prætus' gate thunders Tydeus; him the seer suffers not to cross Ismenus' ford. Tydeus calls him coward; and shakes his crest, while the bells of brass ring out a barbarous sound. On his shield he bears

this proud device : the heavens bright with stars, and in their midst the full-orbed moon, queen of the stars and eye of night. And panting like a war-horse that awaits the trumpet's call, he shouts across the river for the battle."

Him Eteocles feared not :

"Helmet, crest, and bells bite not without a spear ; and that *night* upon his shield too well may mean his night of death. To him will I oppose Melanippus, noble son of Astacus. Honouring the throne of reverence, he hates all boastful speech. Slow to all baseness, he will not prove a coward."

"Electra's gate has fallen to Capaneus. A giant he beyond all mortals ; and he swears, whether the gods will or will not, to sack the city ; thunder and lightning is to him but midday sun. And on his shield he bears a naked man, who for weapons holds a torch, and in gold letters run the words, *The city will I burn.*"

Against him the prince sets Polyphontes, the favourite of Artemis and other gods :

"His insolence will Zeus himself chastise with fiery thunderbolt, not likened then to noon-day sun."

"Third, at the Neistian gate is Eteoclus. Thither he takes his battle-breathing mares, with sounding bridles in barbaric fashion, filled with the blast of panting nostrils. And on his shield is a man in heavy armour, climbing a ladder's rungs to sack his foeman's town,



and his cry is, *Not even Ares self shall drive me from this wall.*"

To him Eteocles opposes Megareus, the son of Creon :

"He takes no boastful splendour in his hand, nor fears a horse's neighing. Either he will fall, true to his fatherland, or taking two men and a town—the foe and his emblem—will deck his father's house with these war-trophies."

"At Pallas Onca's gate there stands Hippomedon, of giant form ; I shuddered when he swung his shield, like the moon's full disk. Surely 'twas no unskilled artisan who showed his cunning in this shield. It bears Typhon, emitting from his mouth flames and smoke, akin to Fire, and snakes in relief surround its rim. Loud too he cries in wild frenzy, as though possessed by Ares, and from his eyes flashes horrid lust of blood."

"Pallas," says Eteocles, "hating pride, shall keep the poisonous reptile from her brood ; next shall Ænops' son, Hyperbius, oppose him ; no fault has he in heart, or form, or arms. And if the other bears Typhon on his shield, on this sits Zeus, his thunderbolt in hand ; and never yet has man seen Zeus overcome."

"And at the gate of Boreas, near Amphion's tomb, there stands the fifth. And by his spear he swears (nor does he fear to prize it higher than the gods or

his own eyes) to sack the town of Cadmus. A stripling still, with heart, no maiden's like his name,\* but fierce, and flashing eyes. And on his shield he bears the city's shame, the ravening Sphinx, holding beneath her feet a Cadmean, so that most arrows might reach him. With such return does Parthenopæus of Arcadia pay the hospitality he has had from Argos."

The prince appoints against him Actor, brother of the last named, a man who says little, but does much :

"He will never let a tongue, of deeds bereft, enter our gates to increase our woes."

"The sixth, at the Homoloian gate, is Amphiaraus the seer, of unequalled wisdom. He, chiding boastful Tydeus, calls him 'murderer,' 'troubler of the State,' and 'to Argos teacher of all ills,' 'the Furies' myrmidon,' and 'murder's minister,' whose counsels led Adrastus to this evil. Polynices too he reproves playing on his name ('much strife'), in that he has come with foreign host to waste in war his father's city and his gods. As seer, he knows that he must leave his body in this soil ; yet will he fight, looking for no inglorious fate. He bears no blazon on his shield ; he wishes to be just, and not to seem."

"Against him," answers Eteocles, "shall stand Lasthenes, though old in mind, in body yet a youth. Swift sees his eye, and his arm not slow."

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\* *Parthenopæus*, "the maiden-faced."

“The seventh at the seventh gate is Polynices. He hopes to mount our walls, and there as king to raise the pæan, and seeks to face his brother in battle. Him will he slay, and with him die, or banish him as he himself was banished. A twofold sign he bears upon his new-wrought shield: a woman, of modest face, leading a man in full equipment. Thereunder stands:

*‘I will bring back this man, and he shall have  
The city and his father’s dwelling-place.’*”

Him will Eteocles himself oppose, trusting that the goddess of justice, Zeus’ virgin daughter, will not befriend one who purposes outrage on his father’s land:

“Brother with brother fighting, king with king,  
And foe with foe, I’ll stand. Come, quickly fetch  
My greaves that guard against the spear and stones.”

In vain the maidens urge him not to take his brother’s life; no cleansing is there from a brother’s blood. Eteocles knows that his father’s curse is drawing the race of Laius to destruction.

“For none may ’scape the ill which heaven sends.”

He hurries forth to the fight, and the chorus express their fear of the power of the Erinyes:

“Now is come punishment for the ancient sin on the house of Laius. The waves of evil rage, one falls, one rises, thundering on the ship of State. To his

children has Œdipus left his curses, which now the Erinyes, swift of foot, fulfil."

A messenger appears, and bids the maidens be of good cheer :

"Our city has escaped the yoke of bondage,  
The boasts of mighty men are fallen low,  
And this our city in calm waters floats,  
And, though by waves lashed, springs not any leak.  
Our fortress still holds out, and we did guard  
The gates with champions who redeemed their pledge.  
In the six gateways almost all goes well ;  
But the seventh gate did king Apollo choose,<sup>16</sup>  
Seventh mighty chief, avenging Laius' want  
Of counsel on the sons of Œdipus."

The brothers fall, slain by each other. The city is saved ; and the earth has drunk the brothers' blood, laid low in a common doom.

The chorus are in doubt whether to rejoice and be glad at the safety of the city, or to bewail the princes' fate. Then the bodies of the brothers are brought in ; and, their hearts chilled with horror, the chorus raise the funeral hymn. Ismene and Antigone are seen approaching in mourning garments, making lament for their brothers. The chorus sing the woeful song of the Erinyes and the harsh pæan of Hades. The sisters lament their brothers' fate in alternate lines, interspersed with short choral responses.

A herald enters and announces the citizens' decree :

“It is ordered to honour Eteocles with seemly burial in his native soil, since he fell in warding off our foes, as beseems the young, and died a blameless and pure death. But Polynices’ corpse shall be cast out unburied, since he would have wrecked the town of Cadmus, had not a god turned aside his spear. No funeral honours may he have, nor shrill song of sorrow; him may no friend follow to his tomb.”

Antigone is resolved to bury her brother, if no other will :

“Strange power there is in ties of blood, that we,  
Born of woe-laden mother, sire ill-starred,  
Are bound by : wherefore of thy full free-will,  
Share thou, my soul, in woes he did not will,  
Thou living, he being dead, with sister’s heart.  
And this I say, no wolves with ravening maw  
Shall tear his flesh. No, no ! let none think that !  
For tomb and burial I will scheme for him,  
Though I be but weak woman, bringing earth  
Within my byssine raiment’s folds, and so  
Myself will bury him. Let no man think  
(I say’t again) aught else. Take heart, my soul !  
There shall not fail the means effectual.”

The herald’s threats are unheeded. She follows Polynices to the tomb, with a part of the chorus, regardless of the people’s decree :

“Let the city doom or not doom  
Those who weep for Polynices ;  
We will go, and we will bury,  
Maidens we in sad procession ;  
For the woe to all is common,

And our State, with voice uncertain  
Of the claims of right and justice,  
Hither, thither, shifts its praises."

The other half of the chorus attend with Ismene the body of Eteocles :

"We will thus, our chief attending,  
Speak, as speaks the State, our praises :  
Of the claims of right and justice ;  
For next those the blessed rulers,  
And the strength of Zeus, he chiefly  
Saved the city of Cadmeans  
From the doom of fell destruction,  
From the doom of whelming utter  
In the flood of alien warriors."

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### "THE SUPPLIANTS."

The *Suppliants* (*Ἰκέτιδες*) was probably the first piece of a trilogy, which the *Egyptians* and the *Danaids* completed. The extremely simple character of the plot, and the correspondingly simple and archaic *mise-en-scène* of the play, would lead us to class it among the earliest productions of Æschylus.<sup>17</sup> Certain allusions which the poet makes to the democracy in Argos, and the praise which he bestows on the Argives, have led some writers to assign ol. 79, 3 (462 B.C.) for the date of its production. But this view does not seem sufficiently supported by the facts.

The play opens with a chorus<sup>18</sup> of the daughters of Danaus, who enter Argive territory as suppliants,

bearing boughs covered with fillets of white wool in their hands. To escape a hateful union with the sons of Ægyptus they have fled to Argos, whence their race derived its origin through Io, who had been driven in frenzy from Argos to Egypt. The aged Danaus sees a band of armed men approaching, and calls on his daughters to take refuge at the shrine of the protecting gods, their white-filleted branches in their hands. The king of the country approaches, and asks who are these women in strange attire. They are, they say, of Argive race, descendants of Io, come there that they may not yield to the sons of Ægyptus; and they beg the king not to give them up to their foes. The king is unwilling to send suppliants away, but dreads the war which he foresees the men of Egypt would wage against him. Therefore let Danaus betake himself to the town, to the sanctuary of the gods; he himself will call the citizens of Argos together, that they may take counsel of the whole assembled people. The chorus implore the help of Zeus, who had freed Io, the common mother of their race, after much suffering, from the madness laid on her by the wrath of Hera. Danaus returns, and tells them the decision of the people. Freely may they dwell in the land; no man, whether stranger or native-born, shall dare to take them thence against their will, and whatsoever free-born man lends not his aid if they want it, to him, by the people's will, is decreed dishonourable exile.

The chorus bless the Argive people for their help; they desire that all may go well with them; that, as a reward for their good deed, no enemy may ever storm their town; that no pestilence, nor famine, nor civil war may ever waste their strength; that the Muses and minstrels may celebrate their name; and that the people, together with a wise aristocracy, may protect the good among them in all honour; that they may always grant to strangers their lawful rights unfringed, without waiting for threat of war; and that the gods of their country may be duly worshipped with feasts and sacrifices. Their father Danaus commends the pious blessings of his daughters; let them however not be discouraged at the unlooked for news he has to tell them: from his watch-tower he has beheld a fleet of ships nearing the land.

The daughters fear the advent of the Egyptian suitors; and their father vainly attempts to encourage them. A herald enters, and calls on them to join their kinsmen in the ships; and whilst he, mocking at the Argive gods and the chiefs of the State, is attempting to carry them off by force, the king appears. He hears his demand, but tells him that, if the maidens follow him of their own free will and pleasure, he may take them; that force was forbidden by the Argive people. The herald departs with threats of war. The king calls on the maidens to retire within the walled town, and there to choose their dwelling, since



such is the people's will. Danaus asks them to give thanks, and bids them steadfastly observe their father's admonition,

“Prizing as more than life your chastity.”

The chorus greet their new home, half of them praying the gods to prevent the hateful marriage, half resigning themselves to the Divine will.

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“THE PROMETHEUS BOUND.”

The *Prometheus Bound* (Προμηθεὺς Δεσμώτης) belongs to the Promethean trilogy, of which the first piece (in the generally received account) was *Prometheus the Fire-giver* (Προμηθεὺς Πυρφόρος), and the third the *Prometheus Unbound* (Προμηθεὺς Λύόμενος). The transgression of Prometheus formed the subject of the first play. After his victory over the Titans, Zeus had determined to destroy the brutal and wicked race of mortals, and to create a new and better one. Then in foolish pity Prometheus brought fire to mankind, whereby they learnt many arts, but became no better. Zeus permitted man to continue to exist, but Prometheus had to expiate his crime; and that is the subject of the second piece. In the third piece, after long torture, came his deliverance, the centaur Cheiron of free will surrendering for Prometheus' sake his immortality. Heracles is commanded by Zeus to set him free. Prometheus sacrifices his pride, and reveals the

secret, which he alone knew, that Zeus must avoid marriage with Thetis, lest the offspring of the union prepare for him the fate of Cronos. Then Heracles slays the eagle, which daily fed upon his liver, and looses him from his bonds. The victory of Zeus over the defiant Titan is at the same time the victory of moral force over that narrow forethought which seeks happiness, not in pious submission to the will of the gods, but in the storing up of those good things which give pleasure and comfort to life.

In this play, or at least in the first scene, Æschylus followed the example of Sophocles in bringing three actors on the stage.<sup>19</sup> The play therefore would appear to have been written in the later years of the poet's life, unless we conclude from this fact, taken together with other considerations, that the piece, as it has come down to us, was touched up by a later hand. It certainly differs in the lyrical parts from the arrangement observed in the poet's other plays.

The scene of the play is laid in a wild, rocky district in a pathless wilderness on the confines of the earth in Scythia. Strength and Force (*Κράτος καὶ Βία*), two allegorical figures, are dragging Prometheus along, accompanied by Hephæstus. Bound by unbreakable bonds of iron to the steep brow of a lofty precipice, the Titan must now expiate his sin against the gods, in that he stole the gleaming fire and gave it to mortals. Hephæstus pleads against

the task of fastening his kinsman to the storm-beaten, overhanging crag ; but Force compels him, threatening him with the wrath of Zeus. So all unwilling, and cursing his own skill, he binds the Titan's arms with chains, drives through his breast the iron wedge, places the girdle round his hips, and makes fast his feet in fetters of brass. Then Strength insults him, imprisoned in his chains, and departing they leave the god alone with his pain.

Prometheus calls the holy Æther, Winds, Floods, Sea, Earth, and Sun to come and witness what he, a god, at the gods' hands must suffer.

“All too clearly I foresee  
The things that come, and naught of pain shall be  
By me unlooked for ; but I needs must bear  
My destiny as best I may, knowing well  
The might resistless of Necessity.”

He hears not far off a rustling sound as of birds ; the air trembles with the light whirr of wings. He is scared with fear of whatever it be that approaches him. It is the chorus of ocean Nymphs, who, with kind intent, approach him on wings swiftly beating ; for the echoing sound of the iron pierced deep down to their caverns, and, unmindful of their father's reproaches and their own modesty, hither have they hasted on winged car. They pity the god's sad fate, and fear worse things for him, since he recklessly threatens his tormentors with vengeance.

Prometheus then tells them the tale of the offence for which Zeus is thus ill-treating him :

“ When Cronos and Zeus once were stirred in mutual strife, alone of the Titans took I my side with Zeus. And by my counsels old Cronos is in the deep, dark pit of Tartarus, with his allies ; and thus am I repaid ! Then Zeus began to share his gifts among the gods ; but of mortal men he took no heed, but rather was he purposed to crush out their race and make another new. And none save I dared cross his will. But I did dare, and mortal men I saved from passing down to Hades, crushed with the thunderbolts. I gave them hope, and so turned away their eyes from death, and gave them fire, that thereby they might learn many arts. Wherefore these ills oppress me now, and I wither on this lone hill, all neighbourless. Helping men, I find no help myself, and but await yet greater evils.”

As he is about to tell his tale to the ocean Nymphs, Oceanus himself appears upon his gryphon :

“ Lo, I come to thee, Prometheus,  
Reaching goal of distant journey,  
Guiding this my wingèd courser  
By my will, without a bridle ;  
And thy sorrows move my pity.  
Force, in part, I deem, of kindred  
Leads me on, nor know I any  
Whom, apart from kin, I honour  
More than thee, in fuller measure.

This thou shalt own true and earnest :  
I deal not in glozing speeches.  
Come then, tell me how to help thee ;  
Ne'er shalt thou say that one more friendly  
Is found than unto thee is Ocean."

He bids him "know himself," submit himself to the reigning powers, and hush his petulance of speech. He offers to go and make an effort to free him from his woes. Prometheus answers him :

"I thank thee, and thank thee again ; for thou art full of friendly zeal. Yet take no trouble for me, and beware lest harm seize thee while pitying my lot. And do not rouse the wrath in Zeus' heart. Away, go to thy home, and keep the mind thou hast."

Oceanus follows his advice, and returns back through the æther.

The chorus grieve for the sufferer's pain ; yet not alone, for all the country round and all who live in holy Asia echo their moan, and all the human race grieves in sympathy with his lamentable woes. One other only have they seen thus bowed in pain of adamantine durance, Atlas, another Titan, another of the gods, who on his shoulders ever bears the mighty vault of heaven.

Prometheus tells them what he did from love of mortals ; how he roused their reason, how he taught them to make themselves dwellings, showed them the stars, number, and writing—mother of the Muses ; how

he tamed horses and made ships, taught the use of healing potions, the varied modes of divination, and the use of things dug out of the earth. So he taught mortals all the arts they know.

Still, hopes the chorus, Prometheus, once freed from his bonds, may be as strong as Zeus himself.

But he knows full well

“It is not thus that Fate’s decree is fixed ;  
But I, long crushed with twice ten thousand woes  
And bitter pains, shall then escape my bonds ;  
Art is far weaker than Necessity.

*Chor.* Who guides the helm then of Necessity ?

*Prom.* Fates triple-formed, Erinyes unforgetting.

*Chor.* Is Zeus then weaker in his might than these ?

*Prom.* Not even he can ’scape the thing decreed.

*Chor.* What is decreed for Zeus but still to reign ?

*Prom.* Thou may’st no further learn ; ask thou no more.”

But the chorus humbly recognise the power of Zeus, who governs all :

“Him and the other gods must sacrifice never fail. Nor will we sin in speech. Whence we shall have long years of life in joyful hope, filling our hearts with radiant cheerfulness. We shudder when we see thy suffering ; for, having no fear of Zeus, too much didst thou honour feeble men. How different is the song we sing from that which once we sang, the wedding hymn when thou, Prometheus, didst with rich gifts persuade and take to wife our sister Hesione !”

Io \* enters, driven madly by the gadfly's sting, and followed by the ghost of Argus, the shepherd with the hundred eyes. Though dead, the earth does not cover him, but ever does he chase her panting over the sea-shore sand. Io too is suffering, without her fault, at the hands of Zeus; she has aroused the jealousy of Hera, and the poor, frenzied maid is mad with fright, driven by the gadfly's sting ever onward. For every night a dream-face appeared to her, wooing her with soft words: "O blessed maiden, why wilt thou still remain a virgin, when thou mightest wed with Zeus, king of the gods? For he doth glow with love of thee. Wherefore scorn not his bed, but go to the deep pasturage of Lerna, where feed thy father's herds." She told her father her dreams of the night, and he sent to Delphi and Dodona to inquire what the gods willed. And they bade Inachus thrust his daughter forth from home and country; and should he refuse, then Zeus' thunderbolt should sweep away his race. So he, unwilling, drove her, all unwilling, from her home. And then forthwith her face and mind were changed; then with two horns, and stung by the biting gadfly, she rushed onward in delirium; and Argus followed her, the earth-born herdsman with the hundred eyes. And him a sudden doom deprived of life. But she is ever

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\* The connexion of this Io episode with the play cannot be properly made clear without the two lost plays of the trilogy.

driven by her madness, and by heaven's scourge is made to roam from land to land.

The chorus shudder at the maiden's tale of woe. Prometheus prophesies, "Still more must she suffer through Hera's hate; by long journeys must she traverse the utmost limits of the earth." And he shows her the way, and tells her of the perils that threaten her till she comes to the mole where the Nile empties itself into the sea by the city Canopus.

"There shall thy mind awake, and thou shalt bear dark Epaphus, lord of the broad Nile valley. And in the fifth generation of his race a band of fifty sisters shall return to Argos, in their flight from wedlock with their cousins, like doves pursued by kites. But never shall the pursuers find happy marriage; for each bride shall redden her sword in her husband's blood. And only one shall be by love persuaded to spare the sharer of her bridal couch. And she at Argos shall bring forth a royal race, and hence shall spring the daring hero, famed for his arrows, who shall loose my bonds."

Io again is driven on by the gadfly's sting. Her heart throbs, her eyes gaze wildly round, and forth she rushes on her changing course, carried on by the force of her madness. The chorus give their opinion

"That the best wedlock is with equals found,  
And that a craftsman, born to work with hands,  
Should not desire to wed



Or with the soft, luxurious heirs of wealth,  
Or with the race that boast their lineage high.

To me, when wedlock is on equal terms,

It gives no cause to fear :

Ne'er may the love of any of the gods,

The strong gods, look on me

With glance I cannot 'scape !

“Such a fate is war that none can war against ; for who can oppose what Zeus ordains ?”

“And yet,” Prometheus tells them, “’tis just through such a marriage, which he purposes, that shall come the fall of Zeus, and the fulfilling of the curse his father Cronos spake. Such a warrior is he arming against himself, stronger than thunder and lightning ; and none but I can show him how he may escape this fate.”

Hermes enters, sent by Zeus, and with proud words bids him tell the marriage which some day shall hurl Zeus from his might. Prometheus receives the courier of the gods with haughty insolence, and tells him there is no torture nor device by which Zeus can compel him to reveal these things, before his bonds are loosed. Hermes threatens him with greater sufferings :

“With thunder and the levin’s blazing flash  
The Father this ravine of rock shall crush,  
And shall thy carcase hide, and stern embrace  
Of stony arms shall keep thee in thy place.  
And having traversed space of time full long,  
Thou shalt come back to light, and then his hound,  
The wingèd hound of Zeus, the ravening eagle,

Shall greedily make banquet of thy flesh,  
Coming all day an uninvited guest,  
And glut himself upon thy liver dark.  
And of that anguish look not for the end,  
Before some god shall come to bear thy woes,  
And will to pass to Hades' sunless realm."

Vainly the chorus counsel submission ; Prometheus only bids him add torture to torture, "yet me he shall not slay." Hermes bids the chorus to withdraw, lest their senses be stunned by the roar of thunder. But they prefer to share their friend's lot ; for traitors are hateful to them, and they loathe no plague more than falsehood. And now the threatened destruction begins.

"Yea, now in very deed,  
No more in word alone,  
The earth shakes to and fro,  
And the loud thunder's voice  
Bellows hard by, and blaze  
The flashing levin-fires ;  
And tempests whirl the dust,  
And gusts of all wild winds  
On one another leap,  
In wild, conflicting blasts,  
And sky with sea is blent.  
Such is the storm from Zeus  
That comes as working fear,  
In terrors manifest.  
O Mother venerable !  
O Æther, rolling round  
The common light of all,  
Seest thou what wrongs I bear?"

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## THE ORESTEAN TRILOGY.

The *Orestea*, consisting of the three tragedies, the *Agamemnon*, *Mourning Women*, and *Eumenides*, is the only trilogy of Æschylus we possess ; and we may well think ourselves happy that fate has allowed this one to survive. On it the poet seems to have lavished the splendour of his noblest poetry, that when he left his fellow citizens he might leave behind a gift which should be at once an honour to himself and to his country. The trilogy was composed in ol. 80, 2 (458 B.C.), and was probably the last which Æschylus exhibited at Athens ; for soon after he left that city and made his way to Sicily, where he died in 456 B.C. From this fact arose the story that he was compelled to leave Athens on account of the terror he had caused to women by the introduction of the Furies on the stage. From the last of the three plays it may be gathered that the poet himself regarded this trilogy as the last he should produce at Athens—the swan's last song before it dies. And when we consider that the *Eumênides* is one long glorification of the city of Athens, her gods, her laws and customs ; when we consider how full is the play of exhortations to the citizens to reverence their old established institutions, and to preserve them from the arbitrary caprice of innovators, can we be wrong in seeing a special significance in the blessings which the Erinyes call down on Athens at the close of the tragedy ?

“ Rejoice, rejoice ye in abounding wealth,  
Rejoice, ye citizens,  
Dwelling near Zeus himself.  
Loved of the virgin goddess whom ye love,  
In due time wise of heart,  
You, 'neath the wings of Pallas ever staying,  
The Father honoureth.

. . . . .  
Rejoice, rejoice once more, ye habitants !  
I say it yet again,  
Ye gods, and mortals too,  
Who dwell in Pallas' city. Should ye treat  
With reverence us who dwell  
As sojourners among you, ye shall find  
No cause to blame your lot.”

Does not the poet seem to say farewell to his native town, which at his great age he could hardly hope to see again ? Are they not the touching words of an old man, who bids his people adieu with wise advice and heartfelt good wishes ? What W. von Humboldt says of the *Agamemnon* may well be applied to the whole trilogy : “ Among all the products of the Greek stage, none can compare with it in tragic power ; no other play shows the same intensity and pureness of belief in the Divine and the good ; none can surpass the lessons it teaches, and the wisdom of which it is the mouthpiece.”

“ The first play of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon*, opens with suggestions of joy and calm, intermingled however more and more with hints of gloom ; till these feelings cul-

minate in a scene of gorgeous pageantry, whose hollowness is transparent to the perceptive eye. Then, when once the dreaded blow has fallen, all feeling of exultation passes away for ever, and our minds are filled with a sense of pure horror. This too is, in its turn, modified to some extent, when Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra impress upon us that they were the instruments of a just vengeance, that Agamemnon was himself not guiltless, and that the house of Atreus lay under a curse not undeserved. We persuade ourselves that the train of events could have had no other issue; but the boldness with which Clytæmnestra acknowledges the crime, the sophistry with which her unlawful love for Ægisthus makes her palliate it, even to herself, above all, the cowardly triumph of Ægisthus, can rouse no other feelings in us than grief and hate, such as would be intolerable but for our confidence in a final vengeance. We can well sympathise with the conflicting feelings of the chorus; all our emotions are on the rack.

“In the *Mourners* the son completes the work of vengeance on his father’s murderers. His gentle disposition, which merely seeks to perform a duty, and has in itself no lust for vengeance, is driven from its course after the deed by feelings which have been hitherto suppressed. None can fail to feel the deepest sympathy with Orestes, when he, though conscious of the justice of his act, feels the madness stealing over his mind, and presently sees the sombre figures of the Erinyes, which

are invisible to the chorus. We recognise that the vengeance of Orestes is itself too great an infraction of natural law to form the last act of the drama.

"This sequel is shown in the third play, the *Eumenides*. The reconciliation of the conflicting powers is, through the wisdom of the gods, accomplished at Athens, whence comes a happy settlement, which is not confined in its results to the history of Orestes."—*Otfried Müller*.

## THE FIRST TRAGEDY OF THE TRILOGY.

### "THE AGAMEMNON." <sup>20</sup>

The scene of the *Agamemnon* is laid in front of the king's palace at Argos. A watchman is discovered on the roof of the palace, watching for the beacon-flame which is to tell the fall of Troy. During long, sleepless nights he has bewailed the mischances of this house, now not administered as of yore; and, longing for release from his toil, suddenly he sees the flaming light leap forth with happy tidings, torch-bearer of the night, shedding on Argos light as of morn. He hastens to carry to Agamemnon's wife the glad news that Troy has fallen. Only one pleasure more he asks, once again to touch his master's hand. Had the house a voice, it could tell a tale of sinister intent; but on his tongue is a weight laid.

The chorus of Argive elders enter and sing :

“Lo ! the tenth year now is passing  
Since, of Priam great avengers,  
Menelaus, Agamemnon,  
Double-throned and double-sceptred,  
Power from sov’ran Zeus deriving—  
Mighty pair of the Atreidæ—  
Raised a fleet of thousand vessels,  
Of the Argives from our country,  
Potent helpers in their warfare.

. . . . .  
We, with old frame little honoured,  
Left behind that host are staying,  
Resting strength that equals childhood’s  
On our staff.”

Clytæmnestra appears, and approaches the shrines of the gods who guard the city. She places the gifts she has brought from the palace on the altars, and soon the whole façade of the palace is ablaze with leaping flames. The queen continues her sacrificial rites, and pays no heed to the questions of the wondering elders, who presently resume their song. They tell of the setting forth of the expedition against Troy ; of the omen that appeared to the two kings, two eagles devouring a pregnant hare, whence the seer prophesied good fortune, the sacking of Troy and countless spoils. Yet Artemis loathes the eagles’ feast ; therefore he bade them invoke Pæan, god of healing, lest Artemis delay the ships, and require an unblest sacrifice :

“For there abideth yet,  
Fearful, recurring still,

Ruling the house, full subtle, unforgetting,  
Vengeance for children slain."

Therefore in their trouble the chorus will turn to Zeus: "For he who formerly had might and power avails us not. And all the fruit of wisdom falls to him who sings the praise of Zeus. For Zeus leads men to wisdom by the law, that pain is gain."

Then when the Achæan host was vexed with adverse winds, Calchas told the chiefs of the wrath of Artemis. At length the irresolute king dared to sacrifice his child.

"All her prayers and eager callings  
On the tender name of father,  
All her young and maiden freshness,  
They but set at naught, those rulers,  
In their passion for the battle.  
And her father gave commandment  
To the servants of the goddess,  
When the prayer was o'er, to lift her,  
Like a kid, above the altar,  
In her garment wrapt, face downwards ;  
Yea, to seize with all their courage,  
And that o'er her lips of beauty  
Should be set a watch, to hinder  
Words of curse against the houses,  
With a silencing constraint.

"Who can say what will happen next? Calchas' art never fails to find fulfilment: all will be as it must. And may blessing attend us!"

Here the chorus turn with deep reverence to the



queen, and ask whether her sacrifices are meant for good news she has heard, or in the hope of good news to come.

She tells them her tidings, good beyond all hope :

“Now have the Argives taken Priam’s city, and the news has come by flashing flames, beacon to beacon, from Ilium. Still is the town filled with varied cries of conquerors and conquered. Yet let the Argives fail not to reverence the gods of the new-conquered city, if they would return in safety.

Such thoughts are mine, mere woman though I be.

May good prevail beyond all doubtful chance !

For I have got the blessing of great joy.”

The queen returns into the palace, and the chorus hasten to thank the gods for the tidings they have heard : Zeus, who has brought these things to pass, and friendly Night, who cast a snare over Troy’s towers.

“Avenged is the Right that men trod under foot. For Zeus has punished Paris and his house, overfilled with precious store. Better far is moderation, with wisdom in heart and soul ; for riches avail not the profaner of the altar of Justice, nor guard against the doom of destruction ;

And no god hears his prayer,

But bringeth low the unjust,

Who deals with deeds like this.

Thus Paris came to the Atreidæ’s home,

And stole its queen away ;

And so left brand of shame indelible  
Upon the board where host and guest had sat.

She leaving to her countrymen at home  
Wild din of spear and shield and ships of war,  
And bringing, as her dower,  
To Ilion doom of death,  
Passed very swiftly through the palace gates,  
Daring what none should dare.

“And Menelaus forgets not his lost bride, honouring her not, nor scorning her. For the ghost of her passed over seas seems to lord it in his house; and phantoms hover round him in his dreams, bringing a vain delight. Such are the woes that gather round him, and worse than this, in every Achæan house is sore distress for those sent forth to battle. For instead of living men come back but ashes of the dead and funeral urns. Loudly they praise the deeds of those who fell but for another's wife; and the people murmur in their homes, and hate the sons of Atreus, who stirred the strife. And other dead find burial round the walls of Troy; and so the people's murmurs rise, and they are filled with discontent, so that we fear to see what ills the dark night hides. Never does the shedder of blood escape the eye of the gods, and the Erinyes abase him who prospers unrighteously, for fame which rouses enmity can give no joy. Better in our eyes is that fortune which lays not cities low, nor yet as a prisoner sees itself enslaved.”

Already has the rumour of the courier flame (*i.e.* the news brought by the chain of beacons) spread through the city. The elders still doubt whether it is true, whether it is not some illusion sent by the gods, or the too hasty folly of a woman's credulous mind. But, lo! a herald approaches, and he will tell them if the tidings of the fire-beacons be true.

The herald comes, and greets his country's soil, the light of his home, its gods, and his master's palace, which to-day will see its king again.

“For Agamemnon is coming to his home, with fortune crowned, beyond all mortals worthy of all honour ; for by Troy's fall is Paris' fault avenged. Countless were our sufferings, great the tale of those that died ; yet are our troubles past. Let us no more lament misfortunes that are gone, but rather bless the fortune of our leaders and our town, and honour Zeus, who brought all these things to pass.”

Clytæmnestra enters and says :

“ I long ago for gladness raised my cry,  
When the first fiery courier came by night,  
Telling of Troïa taken and laid waste.

And that I show all zeal to welcome back  
My honoured lord on his return, (for what  
Is brighter joy for wife to see than this,  
When God has brought her husband back from war,  
To open wide her gates?) tell my lord this,  
‘To come with all his speed, the city's idol ;

And may he find a faithful wife at home,  
Such as he left her, noble watch-dog still  
For him, and hostile to his enemies ;  
And like in all things else, who has not broken  
One seal of his in all this length of time.' ”

She passes into the palace, and the chorus ask the herald whether Menelaus also is returning. He tells them that he and his ship have vanished from the Argive host. “ A storm by the gods’ wrath smote the Achæan fleet, yet still is there hope of his home-coming.” After the herald’s departure, the chorus paint the ruin that Helen brought on Troy.

“ Who gave that war-wed, strife-upstirring one  
The name of Helen, ominous of ill ?  
For all too plainly she  
Hath been to men and ships  
And towers as doom of hell.

“ Like a lion’s cub, which a man fosters to his own destruction, tame, fondled by young and old while still it loves the teat ; but when full grown it shows the nature of its sires, and is a curse no man can master :

“ So I would tell that thus to Ilion came  
Mood as of calm when all the air is still,  
The gentle pride and joy of kingly state,  
A tender glance of eye,  
The full-grown blossom of a passionate love,  
Thrilling the very soul ;  
And yet she turned aside,  
And wrought a bitter end of marriage-feast,  
Coming to Priam’s race,  
Ill sojourner, ill friend,

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Sent by great Zeus, the god of host and guest—  
Erinyes, for whom wives weep many tears.

“There is an ancient proverb that high good fortune dies not childless; for from success an endless woe attacks the race. So think not I; for rather 'tis the child of impious deeds. The house of the just continues unscathed. Recklessness breeds recklessness; but Justice shineth bright even among soot-stained walls. She honours a life ruled by laws, but leaves the gold-decked homes that wrong hath stained, and honours not the might of wealth, but directs all things to their destined end.”

Agamemnon approaches in a chariot, followed closely by Cassandra in a second chariot, and attended by a crowd of guards and prisoners. The chorus greet the king: they hesitate lest they should give too much greeting and honour, or again too little; nor would they wish their mouth to flatter him. Unwillingly they saw him lead his army forth for Helen's sake; but now with friendly spirit they rejoice over the good issue.

Agamemnon greets Argos and the gods that guard the land, to whom he owes his vengeance over Troy and his return; then addressing the chorus, he praises the good sense of those who honour without grudging prosperous friends.

“For many seemed to be devoted friends to me, but only one, Odysseus, found I ever true. Soon in

common council will we deliberate on what concerns the city or the gods, to make lasting what now goes well, and where there needs some healing, by skilful knife or cautery to turn away disease.

“And now will I to home and household hearth  
Move on, and first give thanks unto the gods  
Who led me forth, and brought me back again.”

Clytæmnestra comes out of the palace to welcome him :

“It shames me not to tell my true love of my husband before the citizens of Argos, painting my own unhappy life what time he was at Ilium. How, sitting alone in the house, oft I heard ill reports of my dear lord’s wounds or death ; how I was tormented by dreams, looking for gleaming torchlight, ever watched in vain. Oft from my neck they loosed the noose of death when I would have hanged myself. Orestes, true pledge of our love, did I send off to Phocis, to hospitable Strophius, that he might be safe if the people here overthrew thy council, since men are tempted by weakness. But now is my husband back with me.

“I hail my lord as watchdog of the fold,  
The stay that saves the ship, of lofty roof  
Main column-prop, a father’s only child,  
Land that beyond all hope the sailor sees,  
Morn of great brightness following after storm,  
Clear-flowing fount to thirsty traveller.

“Now, dear lord, leave thy chariot; set not on the

ground the foot that trampled Ilium, but on the purple tapestry pass to the house."

Agamemnon begs her not make his path offensive to the gods by strewing it with purple carpets.

"Not as a god, but mortal would I be honoured. Nor can this splendour add aught to my fame. Count him only happy who brings his life to fair and happy issue."

His wife begs him to yield her this boon, and unwillingly he assents. He bids a servant loose his shoes, that no wrath from the gods may strike him. He bids his wife lead Cassandra with kindly feeling to the house, and give her fair reception, for she is the flower of many spoils.

"On him who gently yields  
His power God's eye looks kindly from afar.  
None of their own will choose a bondslave's life."

Clytæmnestra accompanies her husband into the house, where now again its master returns to rule, the root whose luxuriant foliage reaches to the roof, warding off by its shade the fierce glare of the sun.

"Ah, Zeus the all-worker, Zeus ! work out for me  
All that I pray for ; let it be thy care  
To look to what thou purposest to work."

The forebodings of the chorus suggest to them thoughts of some impending calamity :

"Though with mine eyes I see the safe return, yet has

my heart no steady confidence. May its warnings sink in nothingness! For ever disease treads close on health, and man's prosperity strikes upon some unseen rock. But if he loses but a part of all his treasure, then the whole house sinks not. Zeus' bounty and the harvest's fruits soon drive want away. But who can recall the life when the blood once has flowed at a man's feet?"

Clytæmnestra re-enters from the palace to invite Cassandra to accompany her into the house, and to take part in the sacrifice :

"Even Alcmena's son endured to bear the yoke, and only they feel harshly towards their slaves whose wealth comes suddenly, unlooked for. Here thou shalt have all that custom prescribes."

Cassandra remains silent in her chariot, hearing nothing of the words spoken to her by Clytæmnestra and the chorus. Clytæmnestra addresses her :

"I have no leisure here to stay without :  
For as regards our central altar, there  
The sheep stand by as victims for the fire ;  
For never had we hoped such thanks to give.  
If thou wilt do this, make no more delay ;  
But if thou understandest not my words,  
Then wave thy foreign hand in lieu of speech.

. . . . .  
Nay, she is mad, and follows evil thoughts,  
Since, leaving now her city, newly captured,  
She comes, and knows not how to take the curb,  
Ere she foam out her passion in her blood."



In wrath the queen passes within, and the chorus with kind words bid Cassandra leave her car and yield to Clytæmnestra's wishes.

The maiden sobbing calls on Apollo, who now a second time has plunged her deep in woe, leading her to a house that reeks of blood, where children once were butchered to make a father's meal :

“And now new woe is closing round the house. Now is the wife stretching forth her hand against her lord, who seeks the water of cleansing. She entangles him in robes ; the murderous axe cleaves his body, and lifeless he sinks down into the bath. Woe, woe for these unholy deeds ! Wherefore then hast thou brought me hither ? Is it but to die with thee ? For me waiteth still the stroke of the two-edged sword ! Alas for the marriage of Paris, that brings destruction on his friends ! Alas for Scamander, my native stream ! Once on thy shore I lived in maiden youth ; now full soon shall I wander on Cocytus' strand and Acheron's bank ! Alas for the city utterly destroyed ! Alas for the herds by my father's hand sacrificed to save his towers ! Naught did they avail to save the city from its present ruin. And I, too, soon shall fall dying to the ground ! . . . Apollo gave me this prophetic gift for love. But I once promised to the god my love, and broke my word ; and he ordained that none should give credence to my prophecies. . . . Again the dread inspiration

enwraps my mind. I see Thyestes' children, their hands filled with their own flesh, on which their father fed. A coward lion plots revenge for this, the partner of the wife, and will take her husband's life and mine. Thus I cast aside the robes that bring me scorn, the seer's wand and prophetic wreath, since now Apollo leads me to my doom. But the gods will not leave our death unpunished. A champion comes, a son who, to avenge his father, slays his mother ; now wandering in far exile, but one day returning, he shall crown the misdeeds of his race. For I have seen the anger of the gods lay proud Troy low, and I too now will venture death, and passing through the gates of Hades, pray for a blow that brings me death at once,

“That so with no fierce spasm, while the blood  
Flows in calm death, I thus may close mine eyes.”

In vain the chorus counsel flight.

“The hour is come,” she answers ; “small gain for me in flight, and sweet it is for man to die with honour crowned. Enough of life !

“May my avengers wreak  
Upon my hated murderers judgment due  
For me, who die a slave's death, easy prey.  
Ah ! life of man ! when most it prospereth  
It is but limned in outline ; and when brought  
To low estate, then doth the sponge, full soaked,  
Wipe out the picture with its frequent touch :  
And this I count more piteous e'en than that.” \*

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\* Than her own doom.

She passes into the palace. The chorus raise a lament:

“To this our lord the Blest Ones gave to take  
Priam's city ; and he comes  
Safe to his home and honoured by the gods ;  
But if he now shall pay  
The forfeit of blood-guiltiness of old,  
And, dying, so work out for those who died,  
By his own death, another penalty,  
Who then of mortal men,  
Hearing such things as this,  
Can boast that he was born  
With fate from evil free?”

Twice from the palace sounds the death-cry of the king.

The chorus consider whether they shall summon all the citizens, or rush into the house themselves, or plan how they may encounter a usurped tyranny. Suddenly the queen appears; she is not ashamed to avow her act:

“Thrice did I strike my husband to the heart, wrapping him in the cruel robe of luxury, as in a net ; dark drops of bloody dew he showered on me. The elders' hate and curse is not for me, but for the father who slaughtered his daughter like a lamb, best loved of all my children. And from your vengeance Ægisthus is my guard :

“He to us  
Is no slight shield of stoutest confidence.  
There lies he, one who foully wronged his wife,  
The darling of the Chryseïds at Troïa ;

And there, this captive slave, this augress,  
Lies as you see. And she who, like a swan,  
Has chanted out her last and dying song,  
Lies close to him she loved, and so has brought  
The zest of a new pleasure to my bed."

The lament which the chorus now raise over the king is broken throughout by Clytæmnestra's expressions of joy at the fall of the enemy of her house. She mocks at the murderer of her daughter Iphigenia :

"But she, his child, Iphigenia, there  
Shall meet her father, and with greeting kind,  
E'en as is fit, by that swift-flowing ford,  
Dark stream of bitter woes,  
Shall clasp him in her arms,  
And give a daughter's kiss."

Her deed was done for her own safety ; she has freed her house from the dæmon of revenge, and banished far the madness of internal strife.

Ægisthus enters, greeting the day of vengeance :

"For Atreus, this man's father, once drove from house and home Thyestes, his brother and my sire, quarrelling for rule. And as a suppliant on the hearth he found his life secure, but at a banquet Atreus served to him his children's flesh. And he, unknowing, ate their limbs, and when he learnt the horrid deed, he groaned and, falling backwards, vomited it forth, and laid a curse on the sons of Pelops. So Agamemnon fell ; and I, whom with my unhappy father he sent forth, have justly woven him this doom. And now

right gladly would I die, since I have seen him fall into the net of righteous vengeance."

He meets the threats of the chorus with threats in return. He is roused to fury by their taunts of cowardice, and the hope they express that Orestes may some day return, and take vengeance on the guilty pair. He rushes on them. They seize their weapons; but Clytæmnestra interposes: "Enough; let no more blood be shed."

The chorus continue to taunt Ægisthus:

"It is no Argive custom to fawn on the vile. Go on and prosper, wax fat, do foul deeds: Orestes will revenge. Well mayest thou boast, a cock beside his mate!"

The queen quiets Ægisthus' anger, and leads him into the palace, saying:

"Nay, care not thou for these vain howlings; I  
And thou together, ruling o'er the house,  
Will settle all things rightly."

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## THE SECOND TRAGEDY OF THE TRILOGY.

"THE MOURNERS, OR MOURNING WOMEN."

(CHOEPHORI).

The scene of the *Mourners* is laid at the grave of Agamemnon. Orestes enters with his friend Pylades; he prays Hermes to be his helper and ally, now that he

has returned from exile. He advances to his father's tomb, and on it lays a lock of his hair. Then he sees a band of darkly clad maidens, with his sister Electra in their midst, wending their way with solemn gait towards Agamemnon's sepulchre. He breathes a short prayer to Zeus to aid him in his work of vengeance, and draws aside with Pylades, to learn what this train of women offering prayers may mean.

The chorus of captive Trojan maidens enter. They have been sent to pour libations at the tomb by the godless wife, Clytæmnestra, filled with the wildest terror by a dream, which has been interpreted to her as a sign of the wrath of the gods below towards the murderers of the dead.

“What ransom has been found  
For blood on earth once poured?  
Oh! hearth all miserable!  
Oh! utter overthrow of house and home!  
Yea, mists of darkness, sunless, loathed of men,  
Cover both home and house  
With its lords' bloody deaths.

“Yet soon or late must come righteous punishment; for the blood of foul murder never dries, and streams of water cannot wash it clean. We are but slaves, far from our fathers' home, and therefore must accept both ill and good alike at our lords' hands; but yet with faces veiled we lament our master's fate, chilled through with hidden grief.”

Electra asks the maidens with what words she ought to offer the libations :

“As though they came from loving wife to loving husband? No; that I cannot dare. Or, that there be good recompense to those that bring these gifts and garlands? Or shall I pour in silent shame?”

The chorus advise her to entreat the good-will of the dead for all who love them, for herself and each one that Ægisthus hates, nor to forget Orestes, far away though he be; and to remember too the guilty and their deed of blood, that there may come some god or mortal to requite death for death.

Electra, pouring the libations, prays the gods and calls on her father to pity her and dear Orestes, whom his own mother and he she calls her consort have sold to banishment. May he send Orestes!

“And to myself grant thou that I may be  
Than that my mother wiser far of heart,  
Holier in act. For us this prayer I pour;  
And for our foes, my father, this I pray,  
That Justice may as thine avenger come,  
And that thy murderers perish.”

With such prayers she pours the libations, and the chorus raise the funeral pæan over the fallen captain :

“Soon may he come to set us free, the warrior armed with spear, and Ares hurl his avenging dart!”

Electra has just poured the libations on the mound,

when she sees the lock of hair which had been left there. The hair is like her own, and her heart leaps with the hope that Orestes has sent it. A second sign, some footprints like her own, tell her he is near. Then he comes forward, he whom she so desired. And yet she hesitates. But the likeness of the hair and footprints, and the robe,\* which her own hands wove, remove all doubt. She greets the loved hope of her father's house, their dear deliverer; for to him turns her love for father, mother—hateful now!—and sister slain in sacrifice. May Might and Right and mighty Zeus afford their help!

Orestes joins in her prayer:

“Look down, great Zeus, upon the eagle's orphan brood, eagle that perished in the folds of a fell snake. Help us, that we may honour thee as did our father!”

The chorus bid them be silent, lest some one hear and tell it in the palace. “Apollo's oracle,” Orestes tells them, “will not fail us now. For he bade me venture on the deed, and threatened me with curses if vengeance were not done. And many motives here converge in one: the god's command, sorrow for my father, and pity for the citizens, once Troy's proud conquerors, now subject to two women.” The chorus cry out with confidence:

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\* For Euripides' contemptuous treatment of this recognition-scene see hereafter (chapter iv.).



“Grant ye from Zeus, O mighty Destinies,  
That so our work may end  
As Justice wills, who takes our side at last.  
Now for the tongue of bitter hate let tongue  
Of bitter hate be given. Loud and long  
The voice of Vengeance claiming now her debt;  
And for the murderous blow  
Let him who slew with murderous blow repay.”

At the tomb brother and sister raise the dirge with the chorus. They know not where to look for the help that shall change darkness into light. Oh that their father had died before Troy under some Lycian spear, leaving to his house fair fame! Or that the murderers had found their doom in the place of their noble victim! Oh! if even now Zeus would but hurl his lightning forth upon their guilty heads, and mete out his justice on the unjust! It is impossible to forgive! Fierce as a wolf is their heart, after their mother's deed.

They now recall how only the Trojan captive raised the death-song, in foreign fashion, over the murdered king; and how they buried him, the citizens away, unwept, without lament; how the murderers maimed his body; and how they kept his daughter, like a hound, shut up within the palace. At last Orestes, casting aside all hesitation, is resolved on action. He calls his father to come to the light to aid friend against foe. Electra weeping joins in his prayer, and the chorus add:

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“Yea, hearing now, ye blest Ones 'neath the earth,  
This prayer, send ye your children timely help  
That worketh victory.”

Orestes asks what mean the funeral libations, and the chorus tell him how the godless woman, terrified by dreams and dread visions of the night, had sent these propitiatory gifts :

“For in a dream she thought she bare a snake, and nursing like a child the new-born monster, she gave it her breast, and, lo ! the milk was mixed with blood. So from her bed she leapt in terror, re-lit the extinguished torches, and straightway sent these offerings to the dead, in the hope that they might heal the ill.”

Orestes prays :

“Oh may this dream receive fulfilment ! May I be the snake that slays her, as the dream portends ! And now I bid thee, Electra, go within and hide what we have planned. For as by guile she slew her husband once, so now by guile she dies. As for myself, with my friend Pylades I will appear before the palace gates, as though we came as travellers from Phocis, and there will wait until we gain admittance ; and then before Ægisthus asks, ‘Whence is this stranger ?’ I will strike him to the ground ; and then the insatiate Erinyes shall, as third draught, drink a mother’s blood.”

They leave the stage, and the chorus, remaining

alone, describe Clytæmnestra's terrible deed and the approaching vengeance :

“ Many dread forms of evil bears the earth, and sea, and sky ; yet are all outdone by man's bold thoughts or woman's daring passion, when her love passes the bounds of right. Thus Thestius' daughter slew her son, casting on the flames the fateful torch ; and thus did Scylla slay her aged father, persuaded to the deed by Minos' golden bracelets, when she robbed the sleeping Nisus of his lock of hair, his life-charm.

“ Yet now 'tis not the time  
To tell of evil marriage which this house  
Doth loathe and execrate,  
And of a woman's schemes and stratagems  
Against a warrior chief,  
Chief whom his people honoured as was meet.  
I give my praise to hearth from hot broils free,  
And praise that woman's mood  
That dares no deed of ill.

“ But the curse of man rests on the Lemnian women's crime, one not unlike the guilt we speak of. Yet is wrong avenged of Justice, and Zeus leaves not sin unpunished. Firmly stands the anvil of Vengeance ; the child comes back to his home, and in due time Erinyes, deeply brooding in her heart, exacts full payment for blood that has been shed.”

Orestes and Pylades enter, as travellers at the gates of the palace, and ask for the mistress or, better, the

master of the house. Clytæmnestra appears with her attendants. "I am," Orestes begins, "a traveller from Phocis; and Strophius has charged me, should I come to Argos, to tell his parents of Orestes' death, and to bring this brazen vase, which holds his ashes."

Clytæmnestra laments her son's death, and pities Orestes for being the bearer of such evil tidings; but, she adds, he is none the less welcome on that account. She bids her servants lead the strangers to the palace, and show them such hospitality as is meet for travellers. She herself will take counsel with the lord of her house in this misfortune, that she may not be without advice of friends.

The chorus are left alone on the scene, and ask at the grave of the king that now, when all depends on subtle suasion, Hermes the Chthonian, he who dwells beneath the earth, may come to aid, and direct the sword in vengeful strife. The nurse of Orestes enters, weeping; she has been sent by the queen to call Ægisthus, that he may hear the news from the lips of those that brought it:

"Much will he rejoice when he hears the story; but I, who in the halls of Atreus have borne many griefs, have known no ill like my dear nurseling's death. For I watched over him with a mother's care; alas! in vain."

The chorus advise her, despite her mistress's com-

mand, to call Ægisthus only, not his bodyguard ; for if he comes alone, then will Zeus turn the tide of ill. They now turn to Zeus, and pray that success may attend Orestes' acts ; and may the gods, enriched with the wealth of the house, be one in purpose, and with fresh vengeance atone for the murder of old.

“ May that blood once spilt breed no more murder in the house. May Apollo grant that the house shine forth in brighter guise from out its cloud of gloom ! and may Hermes lend just aid to righteous act ! And we will then sing loud songs of joy, so the city prosper and ourselves, if but misfortune quit our friends. But thou, Orestes, when the time for action comes, cry out thy father's name, when she shall shriek the name of son, and end this wickedness. With Perseus' courage in thy heart, work out the dread love-service, deed of vengeance which shall end thy sufferings.”

Ægisthus enters, to hear for himself the news of the death of Orestes, and to ask the mesenger whether he saw him die himself, or tells it only after a vague report. He enters the palace, and the chorus are filled with expectation.

“ Now has the moment come which shall make clear whether Agamemnon's house is doomed for aye to utter overthrow, or whether it shall rise to new glory. Such a contest wages Orestes against two. May victory be his ! ”

The death-cry of Ægisthus is heard, and a servitor rushes out, crying that Ægisthus is no more. He bids them open the great gates and call the queen, for her life too is threatened. Clytæmnestra appears, and asks what has happened. "The dead," replies the servitor, "are slaying the living." In a moment she understands the enigmatic words. "By guile we perish, as of old we slew." She asks for an axe strong to slay, that she may either conquer or be conquered.

Orestes enters, seeking his mother, and hears her wailing for her lover's death. "She shall share his grave that even in death she may not desert him." The mother begs for pity; she bares her breast, whence once he drew his life. Orestes with a shudder turns to Pylades: "Dare I slay my mother?" Pylades reminds him of Apollo's words and the oath he swore. Orestes is resolved. He bids his mother follow him; he will slay her by Ægisthus' side. For while he lived she preferred him to his father, now she shall share his death. Vainly she reminds him of the filial love a son should show his mother in old age. "I dare not tarry with my father's murderess."

"*Clyt.* Fate, O my son, must share the blame of that.

*Or.* This fatal doom then it is Fate that sends.

*Clyt.* Dost thou not fear a mother's curse, my son?

*Or.* Thou, though my mother, didst to ill chance cast me.

*Clyt.* No outcast thou, so sent to house allied.

*Or.* I was sold doubly, though of free sire born.

*Clyt.* Where is the price then that I got for thee?

*Or.* I shrink for shame from pressing that charge home.

*Clyt.* Nay, tell thy father's wantonness as well.

*Or.* Blame not the man that toils when thou'rt at ease.

*Clyt.* 'Tis hard, my son, for wives to miss their husband.

*Or.* The husband's toil keeps her that sits at home.

*Clyt.* Thou seem'st, my son, about to slay thy mother.

*Or.* It is not I that slay thee, but thyself.

*Clyt.* Take heed, beware a mother's vengeful hounds.

*Or.* How, slighting this, shall I escape my father's?

*Clyt.* I seem in life to wail as to a tomb.

*Or.* My father's fate ordains this doom for thee.

*Clyt.* Ah me! the snake is here I bare and nursed.

*Or.* An o'er-true prophet was that dread dream-born;  
Thou slewest one thou never shouldst have slain;  
Now suffer fate should never have been thine."

He leads her to the palace to her death.

The chorus recall how once came vengeance and just punishment on the house of Priam:

"Now on the house of Agamemnon has come the twofold lion, the twofold Ares. Through the gods' guidance has the exile now attained his end. We shout in triumph for our master's house, escaping from the impious pair. For now is come Revenge, of subtle thought, and in the strife Vengeance, child of Zeus, stretches forth her hand, breathing out wrath against her foes which shall destroy them. Hither Loxias summons her, he who dwells in the cavern on Parnassus. So triumphs the divine over the unrighteous, and reverence is due to the power of heaven's might.

The dawn is here at last ! Now does the house loose off its chains ; again it rises, too long prostrate in the dust. Soon return both song and gladness, when the hearth is cleansed from guilt, and to the dwellers in the house once again falls a lucky cast. The dawn is here at last ! ”

The great gate of the palace opens, and Orestes is seen, holding over the two corpses the bathing-robe in which Agamemnon was entangled.

“Once they sware that they would slay my hapless father, and would die together. Well have they kept their oath. Let the Sun, our father, who sees all things, see the robe that fettered Agamemnon, in which they bound him hand and foot, mute witness of a wife’s unholy deed ; and let it be a witness to her son that he with justice has fulfilled Fate’s sentence on his mother. I need no words to justify Ægisthus’ death ; adulterer, he pays the penalty the law assigns. But she, who like a viper slew her husband, of whom she took the burden of children—once well-loved—beneath her girdle, what must we say of her ? And yet is matricide so terrible, that I myself might doubt—now approving, now condemning—the justice of my act, did not this bloody robe bear witness to her guilt. I feel my reason in a whirl of frenzy. But now, before madness overpowers me, I tell my friends here that I slew my mother not without right, that Loxias ordained this deed. To



him I fly, a suppliant, with bough and wreath, seeking to escape the guilt of kindred blood, a fugitive far from my native land."

In vain the chorus tell him that all will approve his act, for he has freed the Argive State, crushing the two serpents' heads.

"Alas! behold the Erinyes, in Gorgon-form, all clothed in gray, their locks entwined with many serpents. I can bear no more! No phantoms these; full clearly do I see them, my mother's avenging spirits."

"The blood yet fresh," say the chorus, "still stains thy hands, and raises these terrors in thy heart. Loxias will free thee from these ills."

"O king Apollo! See, they swarm, they swarm! And from their eyes is dropping loathsome blood! These forms ye see not, but I see them there. They drive me on, and I can bear no more!"

He rushes forth in madness, and the chorus cry after him:

"Well may'st thou prosper; may the gracious god  
Watch o'er and guard thee with a chance well-timed.

Here then upon this palace of our kings

A third storm blows again;

The blast that haunts the race has run its course.

First came the wretched meal of children's flesh;

Next what befell our king:

Slain in the bath was he who ruled our host,

Of all the Achæans lord ;  
And now a third has come we know not whence,  
To save—or shall I say  
To work a doom of death?  
Where will it end? Where will it cease at last,  
The mighty Atè dread,  
Lulled into slumber deep?”

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THE THIRD PLAY OF THE TRILOGY.

“THE EUMENIDES.”

The scene of the *Eumenides* at the beginning of the play is laid in front of the temple at Delphi. The Pythian priestess of Apollo greets the gods, who in due order have possessed the Delphic shrine: Earth, primordial prophetess; next Themis; and Phœbe of the Titans' race, from whom Phœbus takes his name, and holds the shrine as trusty prophet of his father Zeus. Pallas too she names, and the Nymphs of the Corycian rock,\* Bacchus, the founts of Pleistos, and Poseidon's might, and, lastly, Zeus, of all supreme. Thereupon she goes within the holy seat of inspiration, that she, as the god guides her heart, may tell their fate to those who from Hellas shall be admitted to her by lot. She passes into the *adytum* of the temple; but presently returns trembling and terrified, supporting herself with her hands. For when she reached the shrine all hung with wreaths, she beheld, sitting on the

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\* Parnassus.

*omphalos*,\* a man, accursed of the gods, with bloody hands, holding a blood-stained sword and branch of olive decked with woollen fillets. In front of him there slept, resting on the seats, a troop of women of terrible aspect : hardly to be called women, rather Gorgons ; and yet not that, more like Harpies, only without wings, dark, of fearsome form, snorting as they breathed a breath that none dare approach ; a loathsome humour trickling from their eyes, and their garb fit neither for the temples of the gods nor homes of men :

“Henceforth be it the lot of Loxias,  
Our mighty lord, himself to deal with them :  
True prophet-healer he, and portent-seer,  
And for all others cleanser of their homes.”

The *adytum* of the temple is disclosed. Orestes is sitting on the *omphalos*, and around him lie the sleeping Furies on the seats. Apollo stands at one side of him and Hermes in the background. Apollo is still loyally protecting him. He addresses the suppliant :

“Fast bound in sleep are the loathsome maidens, ancient daughters of Night. Yet thou must fly ; for they will chase thee through the wide mainland, over sea and island, till thou come to Pallas’ city. There, clasping the ancient image of the goddess, thou shalt find judges, who at last shall make to cease this agony, and shall free thee wholly from these ills.”

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\* *ὀμφαλός*, *navel*, a stone in the temple at Delphi, which was considered to be the centre of the earth.

And Apollo calls on Hermes, his brother, to guard him well and guide him, as Zeus himself would wish. Orestes then quits the temple with Hermes.

The ghost of Clytæmnestra rises from the ground.

“Yes, sleep on, sleep on : what need of sleepers now ? Ye put me to great shame, for those I slew cease not from scorning me. But much as I have borne from those near akin to me, slain though I was by matricidal hands, no god is moved to wrath. Yet I have given you many gifts, libations poured and sacrifices offered on the altar-hearth ; and must I see them trampled in the dust ? For he, like a fawn, has fled, slipping the net ye cast around him, and laughing you to scorn.

“Moan on, the man is gone, and flees far off :

My kindred find protectors ; I find none.

Too sleep-oppressed art thou, nor pitiest me :

Orestes, murderer of his mother, ’scapes.

Dost snort ? Dost drowse ? Wilt thou not rise and speed ?

What have ye ever done but work out ill ?

Yea, Sleep and Toil, supreme conspirators,

Have withered up the dreaded dragon’s strength.

Thou, phantom-like, dost hunt thy prey and criest,

Like hound that never rests from care of toil.

What dost thou ? Rise, and let not toil o’ercome thee,

Nor, lulled to sleep, lose all thy sense of loss.

Let thy soul feel the pain of just reproach ;

The wise of heart find that their goad and spur.

And thou, breathe on him with thy blood-flecked breath,

And with thy vapour, thy maw’s fire, consume him ;

Chase him, and wither with a fresh pursuit.”

The ghost disappears, and the chorus of Furies, roused from sleep, cry out that the prey has escaped their net and fled. They accuse Apollo of mocking them, the ancient goddesses, and of stealing away, to their shame, the godless matricide.

“Such are the doings of the younger gods; yet him they cannot rescue; even though he flee beneath the earth, he is not free. For the guilty head does ever draw upon himself another avenging spirit!”

Apollo bids them go forth at once from his shrine and leave the holy seat, lest the winged snake of his bow encounter them.

“Monsters! who lap the blood of live men’s bodies, this temple is no place for such as ye. But there where criminals are slain or mutilated is meet abode and the feast ye love, ye loathsome goddesses! Not in a god’s temple should ye dwell, but in a lion’s cave who battens upon blood.”

In their turn they reproach the god that he bade this stranger take his mother’s life, that he gave him shelter from his bloody deed, and now is hindering them from carrying out their appointed task, from still pursuing a matricide.

“I bade him,” answers Apollo, “avenge his father; I bade him, as a suppliant, seek my shrine. It was but just the wife, who slew her lord, should die at her son’s hands, that there be no dishonour to the holy

tie of marriage, which Zeus and Hera instituted ; and that Aphrodite, through whom men bind the dearest bonds, might not be shamed. Not justly do ye chase Orestes ; let the goddess Pallas judge our strife."

The avenging powers will not abdicate their venerable office, nor let the man escape. They hurry forth in swift pursuit, but Apollo is resolved to help :

"For dreadful among gods and mortals too  
The suppliant's curse, should I abandon him."

The scene now changes to the temple of Athena Polias at Athens. Orestes enters, purified by long journeying over land and sea. Obeying the command of the oracle, he comes to the shrine and image of the goddess, praying that she may graciously receive a man accurst. There remaining, he will await her judgment.

The Furies enter. As a hound pursues a wounded deer, by sea and land they track the fugitive by his blood-drops. The scent of human blood has led them here, where the murderer has found new shelter by the goddess's image, awaiting Pallas' judgment.

"A mother's blood once spilt upon the ground can never be raised up again, and he must make amends. From his own living body must he let the Erinyes lap his blood ; and then shall he go, dragged down, and with like pain shall expiate his mother's woe there, where Vengeance claims full recompense. For Hades

is a mighty judge of men, seeing all things, and in his heart deep writing them."

Orestes fears their threats no more.

"The guilt of matricide is washed away by many cleansing rites; therefore now I dare call Pallas to my help. So without strife shall she win both me myself and Argos' land and people as true and faithful allies for all time."

The Furies hope that neither Apollo's nor Athena's might may save him from their vengeance. They close round him, to sing the binding song. For it beseems them to raise the dread song, and to make known the duties of the office which they of right discharge towards men.

"Not on one who pure hands lifteth  
Falleth from us any anger,  
But his life he passeth scatheless;  
But to him who sins like this man,  
And his blood-stained hands concealeth,  
Witnesses of those who perish,  
Coming to exact blood-forfeit,  
We appear to work completeness.

"O mother Night, who didst bear us, terrors of the light and darkness, the son of Leto now would rob us of our power; and yet did Destiny assign to us the everlasting task, that we should follow up the footsteps of the guilty till he sink beneath the ground; nor even Death can take away our prey. From immortal

gods must we hold aloof, and there is none that shares our feast with us; we do not clothe our forms in garments white. On the guilty one we rush to punish him for fresh-shed blood. Thus we relieve the gods of the grievous task of punishment, and leap upon the fugitive; and the pride of man, although it rises now as high as heaven, is laid low in the dust, when we weave our dances round him; frenzy seizes him, and the wailing cries of the crowd tell of the dark shadow which rises o'er the house. We ever work our will, and ne'er forget our task, and no man cheats us of fulfilling our work of vengeance. What mortal man is there who does not bend in awe when he hears the task that Destiny assigns us, the holy office given us by the gods? Who does not honour us, though our kingdom lies deep down in sunless gloom?"

Athena, hastening from afar, comes in swift chariot from Scamander's stream. She asks:

"Who are ye? Who this stranger before my sacred image?"

The chorus answer her

"Dread daughters we of mother Night, the Curses: our office, to drive murderers from their home. Wherefore we pursue this man, who slew his mother."

Orestes answers:

"I am not come, O Pallas, asking expiation. Long since was I freed from all pollution. From Argos



am I. With murderous craft my mother slew my father Agamemnon; and I (till then an exile) came to my home and slew my mother, with her blood avenging a father's blood. Loxias shares my guilt, threatening dread penalties, if I avenged not that crime. Judge then my cause, if what I did were right or wrong; and I, whatever thy judgment, am content."

Athena answers :

"I dare not drive forth from my temple a suppliant who has been purged from blood-guiltiness, nor is it well to send these away, lest their wrath bring suffering on the land. Therefore I will appoint, as judges over murder, men under oath, chosen from the most noble citizens, an ordinance for all time; and these by their oath shall give true verdict."

She departs, and the chorus begin to protest :

"If new ordinance over-ride our ancient power and set free from guilt this matricide, then will that deed lead men to do the like; for who that has not awe would hold the Right in honour? Sin is child of godlessness; but health of the soul brings blessing. Wherefore let man revere the altar of Right, nor dare, setting his eye on gain, to overturn it with godless foot. Soon cometh punishment. But he who honours parents and rites of hospitality lives not unblessed, is never utterly undone; while he who with bold daring passes beyond the Right, he, I say, will soon reef his sail when the

might of the storm is upon him. His ship breaks up ; vain his cries for help ; and God but mocks when he sees the former boaster in death-struggle with the waves. The ship—the happiness of former days—strikes on the reefs of Right, and he sinks unwept, unheard.”

Athena returns with the twelve judges of the Areopagus,<sup>21</sup> and bids the herald command silence, that the court may hear the trial. Apollo enters as witness for Orestes, that he is cleansed from pollution, and as his champion : “ For I take all the guilt of bloodshed ; let the suit proceed.”

Athena commands the chorus to present their case.

They ask Orestes :

“ Did'st thou slay thy mother ? ”

“ I deny it not.”

“ How was the murder done ? ”

“ I pierced her throat with a sword-thrust.”

“ Who counselled this ? ”

“ Apollo, standing there. He bears me witness. He exhorted me to slay her, who sinned a double sin against her husband and my father.”

“ And yet thou livest, but she is quit by death.”

“ No Furies followed her.”

“ She shed no kindred blood.”

Apollo interposes and testifies :

“ Zeus willed the deed, since in his bath, entangling him in a long robe, she slew a hero-chief, who bore the

honour of a sceptre given by Zeus, as he came home from noble deeds of war, rich in gain of booty."

"How then can Zeus," ask the chorus, "make of such high moment a father's death, when he himself once bound in chains his aged father Cronos?"

Whereupon Apollo makes reply :

"Those chains may be undone, that wrong be cured,  
And many a means of rescue may be found :  
But when the dust has drunk the blood of men,  
No resurrection comes for one that's dead.

The mother is not parent of the child  
That is called hers, but nurse of embryo sown.  
He that begets is parent : she, as stranger,  
For stranger rears the scion.  
Here nigh at hand, as witness, is the child  
Of high Olympian Zeus, for she not e'en  
Was nurtured in the darkness of the womb.  
And I this man have sent as suppliant  
Upon thy hearth, that he may faithful prove  
Now and for ever, and that thou, O goddess,  
May'st gain him as ally and all his race."

The pleadings are now over, and Athena calls upon her citizens to decide their first great murder-cause :

"And for ever shall these judges have their council-hall where once the Amazons, as enemies of Theseus, with their host beleaguering the town, offered sacrifice to Ares ; and to this very day that rock is called the Hill of Ares (Areopagus). There shall the citizens' awe, with kindred fear, restrain from doing wrong by

day or night. Taint not this pure spring, nor cast out that awe that checks the evil-doer, howsoever irreverent, from lawlessness or tyranny. Let it be a bulwark, a safeguard for your city, such as no people boast :

“This council I establish pure from bribe,  
Reverend, and keen to act, for those that sleep  
An ever-watchful sentry of the land.

“Now rise, and take your voting-pebbles, and so decide the cause !”

The Areopagites cast their stones into the urns, canvassed by Apollo and the chorus in turn to vote for or against Orestes. The votes are counted, Orestes and the chorus awaiting the result with intense interest. The number is found to be equal. Athena gives her casting vote for the prisoner, and he is thereupon acquitted.

Orestes thanks his preserver, the goddess, who has made open for him a return to his home, and Apollo too, and Zeus, third saviour, who has freed him, despite his mother's champions.

“And I will now wend homeward, giving pledge  
To this thy country and its valiant host,  
To stand as firm for henceforth and for ever,  
That no man henceforth, chief of Argive land,  
Shall bring against it spearmen well equipped.  
For we ourselves, though in our sepulchres,  
On those who shall transgress these oaths of ours

Will with inextricable evils work,  
Making their paths disheartening, and their ways  
Ill-omened, that they may their toil repent.  
But if these oaths be kept, to those that honour  
This city of great Pallas, our ally,  
Then we to them are more propitious yet.  
Farewell then thou, and these who guard thy city.  
May'st thou so wrestle that thy foes escape not,  
And so win victory and deliverance."

The Furies are filled with wrath at their defeat, and threaten to call woe and curses on the land :

"I will let fall venom from my heart upon this land, and make it barren. Thence may a murrain, without leaves or fruit, proceed and swoop over the plain, and spread a destroying blight throughout the land."

"Listen to me," Athena says to them, "and grieve not over much. An equal vote lays no defeat on you. Zeus himself through me gave evidence ; Apollo has given witness for Orestes : and therefore hurl ye not fierce anger on this land. For I appoint for you a dwelling here, where, sitting enthroned on rich hearths, ye shall receive reverence from the State."

They reiterate their curse.

"Well might I," says Athena, "use force ; for I alone of all the gods know the keys of the chamber in which the lightning-flash lies locked. But that I need not ; rather, let your anger cease, and I will give you high honour and a dwelling near to mine, and rich offerings

from the first-fruits of this broad land. Ye are the older goddesses, therefore think it not shame to dwell by the house of Erectheus, and to have the people's gifts. Never shall ye say that ye were shown no hospitality; and if ye will not stay, show ye no anger with this town, where ye have offered to you honour and command."

At last the Furies consent. Their wrath leaves them, and to Athena's joy they raise a song of blessing for the city, in which henceforth shall be their dwelling, next to Pallas and to Zeus, the lord of all, and Ares. They promise happiness beyond all measure, and fruitfulness of soil; never shall pestilence attack the land; well shall all the flocks prosper; manly strength shall not fade away in bloom of youth; the love of husbands shall be the lot of lovely maidens; and never more shall civil strife gain footing in the land. With friendly purpose shall men do to one another acts of kind intent, and in their hate shall they be of one accord.

They depart, calling down blessings on the State. Athena bids the dwellers in the city conduct the Sisters with bright light of torches to the dwellings there assigned them. So let them pass beneath the earth with sacred light and sacrifice, with thoughts benign and blessings on the land. The procession of citizens end their song with shouts of joy.

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## THE SATYRIC DRAMA "PROTEUS."

At the close of this series of noble plays followed the satyric drama *Proteus*, which has not come down to us. In this probably, following Homer (*Od.* iv. 351), Æschylus described the adventures of Menelaus with the sea-god Proteus, as a contrast to the tragic tale of Agamemnon. There is possibly an allusion to the satyric play in *Agamemnon* 617, where the chorus ask the herald for news of the fate of Menelaus. The goddess Eidothea, daughter of Proteus, clothes Menelaus and three of his companions in seal-skins, in order that he may deceive the sea-god and find out from him which way to return. The god first terrifies him by assuming various forms, and finally gives him the information for which he asks. He tells him the terrible fate of his brother Agamemnon, and possibly also the vengeance of Orestes, and its dread consequences, with his final expiation. He concludes by advising him to hasten home. The contrast between Menelaus in his seal-skins and Agamemnon shrouded in the robe in which his wife slew him, between Proteus counting his seals and Athena counting the votes, between the gay banter of the chorus of satyrs and the dread troop of Furies—such contrasts could not but relieve the spectators after the tension of the tragedies they had just witnessed.

## CHAPTER III.

### SOPHOCLES.

“Singer of sweet Colonus and its child,  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,  
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.”

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE second of the three great tragic poets was Sophocles, the son of Sophillus (Σόφιλλος), a well to do man in respectable circumstances, who carried on by means of slaves a factory for the making of weapons. He was born probably in (ol. 71, 1) 496 B.C. in the Attic deme Colonus (not Colonus in the market-place, but Colonus Hippius, belonging to the tribe of Ægeis), which he has immortalized in his *Ædipus Coloneus*. He praises the place where he was cradled, the plain noted for its steeds, and his native hill at bright Colonus as the most beautiful spot on earth.

#### STROPHE I.

OF all the land far famed for goodly steeds,  
Thou com'st, O stranger, to the noblest spot,  
Colonus, glistening bright.  
Where evermore, in thickets freshly green,  
The clear-voiced nightingale  
Still haunts, and pours her song,  
By purpling ivy hid,



And the thick leafage sacred to the god,  
    With all its myriad fruits  
    By mortal's foot untouched,  
    By sun's hot ray unscathed,  
    Sheltered from every blast ;  
There wanders Dionysus evermore,  
    In full, wild revelry,  
And waits upon the Nymphs who nursed his youth.

## ANTISTROPHE I.

And there, beneath the gentle dewes of heaven,  
The fair narcissus, with its clustered bells,  
    Blooms ever, day by day,  
Of old the wreath of mightiest goddesses ;  
    And crocus golden-eyed ;  
    And still unslumbering flow  
    Kephisus' wandering streams ;  
They fail not from their spring, but evermore,  
    Swift rushing into birth,  
    Over the plain they sweep,  
    The land of broad, full breast,  
    With clear and stainless wave ;  
Nor do the Muses in their minstrel choirs  
    Hold it in slight esteem,  
Nor Aphrodite with her golden reins.

## STROPHE II.

And in it grows a marvel such as ne'er  
    On Asia's soil I heard,  
Nor the great Dorian isle from Pelops named,  
    A plant self-sown, that knows  
    No touch of withering age,  
    Terror of hostile swords,  
    Which here on this our ground  
    Its high perfection gains,

The gray-green foliage of the olive tree,  
Rearing a goodly race:  
And never more shall man,  
Or young or bowed with years,  
Give forth the fierce command,  
And lay it low in dust.  
For, lo! the eye of Zeus,  
Zeus of our olive groves,  
That sees eternally,  
Casteth its glance thereon,  
And she, Athena, with the clear gray eyes.

## ANTISTROPHE II.

And yet another praise is mine to sing,  
Gift of the mighty god  
To this our city, mother of us all,  
Her greatest, noblest boast,  
Famed for her goodly steeds,  
Famed for her bounding colts,  
Famed for her sparkling sea.  
Poseidon, son of Cronos, lord and king,  
To thee this boast we owe;  
For first in these our streets  
Thou to the untamed horse  
Didst use the conquering bit.  
And here the well-shaped oar,  
By skilled hands deftly plied,  
Still leapeth through the sea,  
Following in wondrous guise  
The fair Nereids with their hundred feet.

—*Æd. Col.*, ll. 669-717.

Sophocles had the benefit of a careful education. He was taught music and dancing by Lampros (perhaps no other than the dithyrambist Lamprocles), who was

at that time the best teacher of these arts at Athens. After the victory at Salamis, the graceful youth led the choric dance round the trophies to the sound of the lyre. With his first tragedies (among which was probably *Triptolemus*) he conquered Æschylus, ol. 77, 4 (468 B.C.). It was just at the time when Cimon had returned from his brilliant double victory at Eurymedon. Cimon and his nine colleagues had offered the usual libations to the gods in the theatre. The archon Apsephion would not let them leave, but compelled them, after taking the oath, to sit down again and act as judges; there were, he said, just ten of them, and each from a different tribe. He told them that the greatest excitement prevailed among the audience at the first appearance of the young Sophocles, and his new style of poetry. The appearance of the generals put all fear of partisanship on one side.

To his *Antigone* he owed the honour of the joint command with Pericles of the fleet against Samos,<sup>22</sup> ol. 84, 4 (440 B.C.). He portrayed the duties of a leader of the State so well in the character of Creon, that the Athenians thought it only right to give him the command, that he might prove his words by deeds. He makes Creon speak thus (*Antig.* 175 seq., 661 seq.):

“And hard it is to learn what each man is  
In heart and mind and judgment till he gain  
Experience in princedom and in laws.  
For me, whoe’er is called to guide a State,

And does not catch at counsels wise and good,  
And holds his peace through any fear of man,  
I deem him basest of all men that are,  
And so have deemed long since ; and whosoe'er  
As worthier than his country counts his friend,  
I utterly despise him. I myself—  
Zeus be my witness, who beholdeth all !—  
Would not keep silence, seeing danger come,  
Instead of safety, to my subjects true.  
Nor could I take as friend my country's foe ;  
For this I know, that there our safety lies,  
And sailing while the good ship holds her course,  
We gather friends around us.

For he who in the life of home is good  
Will still be seen as just in things of State ;  
I should be sure that man would govern well,  
And know well to be governed, and would stand  
In war's wild storm on his appointed post,  
A just and good defender. But the man  
Who by transgressions violates the laws,  
Or thinks to bid the powers that be obey,  
He must not hope to gather praise from me.  
No ! We must follow whom the State appoints  
In things or just or trivial, or, may be,  
The opposite of these. For anarchy  
Is our worst evil, brings our commonwealth  
To utter ruin, lays whole houses low,  
In battle-strife hurls firm allies in flight ;  
But they who yield to guidance, these shall find  
Obedience saves most men."

In this command he arranged a treaty with the Athenian allies in Samos and Chios. In the latter island he

met the poet Ion, who later gave an account of his meeting with Sophocles in his *Ἐπιδημιαί* (probably an account of the visits of illustrious men to Chios). In this he drew a lively sketch of the poet's impressive and yet winning manners, when they were dining together at the house of the Athenian *proxenos* (*Athen.* xiii., p. 603, E). On another occasion, during the Peloponnesian War, Sophocles held the post of *strategos* along with Nicias (*Plut., Nic. cap. xv.*), but we do not know the date of this command. In ol. 86, 1 (435 B.C.) he had, as *ἑλληνοταμίας*, the care of the confederate treasury, at that time kept on the Acropolis. Further, we know that he was invested with some priestly dignity. When in 413 B.C. the question of giving the State an oligarchical government arose, Sophocles was one of the legislative commission of *πρόβουλοι* (*Arist., Rhet. III.*, 18). In the *Peace*, 697, Aristophanes calls the poet an old miser, who had become a very Simonides, and for a consideration would have gone to sea on a rush-mat; but this is one of the harmless jokes of comedy, which often says the opposite of what it means, or, at worst, the careless exaggeration, we may suppose, of the satirist.

He never abandoned his native town, though he was loaded with invitations from kings and despots, such as Archelaus of Macedon and the Sicilian princes. As he says himself in one of his plays (*Fragm.* 788):

ὅστις γὰρ ὡς τύραννον ἐμπορεύεται,  
κείνου 'στὶ δούλος, κὰν ἐλεύθερος μόλῃ.\*

In one respect the greatest Attic poet resembled Goethe, the greatest poet of Germany: both enjoyed a more than usually long life of serene and uninterrupted happiness. Only from such untroubled minds as these can the clear light of poetry shine forth in all its cloudless brightness. Another story is told of Sophocles, which is probably the invention of a later age. It is said that his sons applied to the court to appoint a guardian to look after his affairs, on the ground that he had become childish and incapable through age; and that he answered the charge by saying, "If I am Sophocles, I am not weak-minded; and if I am weak-minded, I am not Sophocles," and by reading the famous chorus from the *Ædipus Coloneus* (Cic., *De Sen.* 7, 22). Perhaps the story arose from a dissension between his two sons, Iophon and Ariston, the latter of whom was his father's favourite. The date of his death is given as 405 B.C. (ol. 93, 3). The account of the old epigram (*Anth. Pal.* vii. 20), that he met his death "by swallowing the dark-stoned fruit of Bacchus," is probably to be taken in an allegorical sense, as, according to other accounts, he died of joy at winning a prize. It is said that his body could not be brought

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\* Whoso will enter in a monarch's house  
Is but his bond-slave, though he come as free.

to the family burying-place in the neighbourhood of Decelea, as that place was then in the hands of the Spartans. Whereupon Bacchus appeared to the commander, Lysander, in a dream, and bade him do all funeral honour to the new siren. As he paid no heed to this, the god appeared a second time, and laid the same command on him. The general, afterwards learning from some Athenian deserters that Sophocles was dead, granted the Athenians a truce, that they might bury the man whom the gods so loved.\*

His tomb was afterwards marked by the figure of a siren, with the following inscription :

κρύπτω τῷδε τάφῳ Σοφοκλῇ πρωτεῖα λαβόντα  
τῇ τραγικῇ τέχνῃ, σχῆμα τὸ σεμνότατον.†

The Athenians instituted an annual sacrifice to commemorate the perfection of his art. A few years after his death the comic poet Phrynichus thus referred to him in his play the *Muses* :

μάκαρ Σοφοκλέης, ὃς πολὺν χρόνον βιοῦς  
ἀπέθανεν εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ καὶ δεξιός.

\* Thus the *Vit. Soph.*, and a passage in Pliny. *H. N.* vii. 30, which agrees with it. But Lysander at that time was commander of the fleet, and not of the land forces. Pausanias (I. 21, 1) tells the story more cautiously of "the Spartan commander."

† Beneath this tomb reposeth Sophocles,  
In tragic art with highest glory crowned,  
In outward form of all most venerable.

πολλὰς ποιήσας καὶ καλὰς τραγωδίας  
κυλῶς ἐτελεύτησ' οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακόν.\*

In a biography of early date is a noteworthy remark made by the Alexandrian compiler Istrus : τὸν Σοφοκλέα ταῖς Μούσαις θίασον ἐκ τῶν πεπαιδευμένων συναγαγεῖν. This may well be taken to refer, as Schömann suggests, to an association formed by the friends of literature and art to show honour to the Muses. We may well see in this society "a commencement and foreshadowing of those corporations which, spreading over the whole of Greece, formed one vast association with a common membership publicly recognised by the State. They were formed in honour of some one deity, generally Dionysus, but also Zeus, Apollo, and the Muses. They were composed of lovers of music, poets, actors, players on the flute, cithara, and other instruments of a like character, who made it their object, by the aid of music, poetry, and the dance, to celebrate the festivals of the gods in a fitting manner, and that too, not only in their own communities, but also in others less wealthy." (Sommerbrodt.)

As the tragedies of Æschylus were the work of a deep poetic nature, half unconscious of the grandeur of

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\* Blest, yea, thrice blest, was Sophocles, who lived  
Long years, of subtle wit and prosperous life,  
Who having made full many a noble play  
Came to his noble end without a grief.



its conceptions, so those of Sophocles are distinguished as the artistic product of a poetical gift, which enabled him to transform the grand but rough-hewn material of nature into artistic productions of ideal beauty. Sophocles brought to perfection what Æschylus created. He himself has well characterized the difference between his work and that of his predecessor: "What Æschylus creates lives and is good; but he himself knows not why it has life and goodness."

After the expression of such sentiments, Sophocles may well pass as a true pupil of Æschylus, though nature is the chief school of art; and Aristophanes does well (*Ran.* 788) in making Sophocles, on his arrival in the lower world, be welcomed by Æschylus, who kisses him, and, stretching out his right hand to him, willingly makes room for him on the poetic throne. The art of Sophocles is seen at once in the order he imposed on the irregular growth of the Æschylean tragedy. Giving up the arrangement of tragedies in trilogies, he made each in itself an artistic whole, in which the real aim of tragedy is kept ever in view—the purification<sup>23</sup> of the feelings of pity and terror by means of the indulgence of those very feelings. Whatever tragedy may have lost by this in epic breadth and continuity it gained in lyric beauty and concentrated action. With Æschylus the plot is developed on epic lines, with a view of representing the outward strife of the two hostile forces, the claim of the race and of the individual, which

hurry men into destruction ; and the curse ends only when the two forces are exhausted, and peace restored through the mediation of some third power outside them. In Sophocles, the struggle lies between the free-will of man and the law of necessity ; pity and terror are aroused by the unequal strife between human weakness and the higher powers. The purification consists in the inspiring thought that, when once the fault of mortal weakness is expiated, the original harmony between man's free-will and the divine law of necessity is re-established, and the hero's suffering is but the cleansing fire through which he passes on to godhead. The pervading idea in Æschylean tragedy is the *pathetic*, mortal weakness opposed to divine power. The insolence and pride of weak humanity rouse the anger of the gods against guilty and innocent alike, and this can only be averted by humble submission. The key-note of Sophoclean tragedy is the *ethical*, the conflict of duties. Human error provokes the divine punishment inflicted by "Destiny, great and gigantic, who exalts man in abasing him" (Schiller). Sophocles made tragedy more human by taking man as his subject ; Æschylus moves more often in the world of gods, in which the spectators take a more distant interest, tinged with awe. In Euripides, on the other hand, man is little concerned with religious motives or divine intervention. With him the gods appear as creatures of the fancy, or despotic tyrants, while the sufferings of his heroes

proceed either from the unjust actions of the gods, which rouse indignation, or from some stupid blunder of their own, which shows them to be mere fools.<sup>24</sup> Both Æschylus and Sophocles are deeply religious poets. Both are convinced that moral power is ever at the end victorious over necessity. They differ in this, that with Æschylus the Olympian deities are the possessors of this moral power, as contrasted with the Titans, while Sophocles makes man share it with the gods. Consequently Æschylus glorifies the power of the gods at the expense of the merit of man, and Sophocles exalts human nature by recognising the divine element in it. With him man stands near god; both are kindred beings. The harshness of the Æschylean conception of the government of the world is in his hands softened by love and trust; and blind necessity, to which god and man alike are subject, appears as a beneficent law, evolving order out of chaos, and setting a just limit to the powers of the will.

In politics Sophocles seems to have taken the position most worthy of a true poet. There are no direct references or allusions to the topics of the day in any of the plays which have come down to us. He does not degrade poetry to be the handmaid of politics, and still less the slave of the ruling faction. He always inculcates a due submission to established laws. The man who can guard his own house he considers most competent to defend the State; but the man who

violently over-rides the law of the land, and thinks to command the powers that be, him he can never praise. (*Ant.* 664.)

Taking the nobility of human nature as his subject, the greatness of the poetical art of Sophocles is seen in his clear portrayal of character. Even in classical times he was praised for his power of bringing a character before our eyes in half a line, or even a single word. His characters are no longer, like those of Æschylus, mere outline drawings, but elaborately finished pictures, every feature full of animating life. Nor, on the other hand, are they portraits of every-day life, like those of Euripides. He never made shipwreck of his art, as the latter did more than once, by descending from the ideal to a commonplace realism. As he himself said, "I represent men as they should be ;<sup>24</sup> Euripides, as they are." \* He softens down the rough and crude Æschylean hero with a touch of human sensibility. He is the only poet of antiquity † who adequately grasped the nobility of a woman's nature, as he depicts it in his Deianeira and Tecmessa, or in those contrasted pairs of gentle and heroic women, Electra and Chrysothemis, Antigone and Ismene. As

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\* *Arist., Poet.* cap. xxv. : Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη αὐτὸς μὲν οἷους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδην δὲ οἷοι εἶσιν.

† [Euripides is generally accounted a woman-hater ; but there are no finer ideals of womanhood than his Alcestis, Iphigenia, Polyxena, and Macaria.]

the characteristics of Æschylus are manliness and sublimity, so those of Sophocles are delicacy and tenderness, qualities which never degenerate into effeminacy or feebleness. The ancients used to call him a "bee", or "the sweet", because he could always extract what was sweetest. It is significant too that he never undertook, as other poets did, to play the characters of the heroes in his own plays. Only in two of his pieces, the *Thamyris* and the *Washing Maidens* (Πλύντριάι), did he appear on the stage. In the former he took the part of the singer blinded by the Muses with such success that he was painted in the Stoa Poikile as Thamyris with a cithara. In the *Washing Maidens* he played the girlish heroine, the princess Nausicaa, and won general admiration for his versatility and his graceful attitudes in the game of ball.

The same graceful sweetness marks the external form of his tragedies. His style holds the mean between the bold grandeur of Æschylus and the rhetorical and polished realism of Euripides; his language is simple yet dignified, illustrated by an imagery that adorns but does not burden the thought, well-balanced and harmonious. He convinces us by his sincerity, not dazzling us, as Euripides does sometimes, with sophistries, nor subordinating the intellect to the emotions. "In the quick, alternating interchange of speech, Æschylus hurls his thoughts like mighty rocks, Euripides plays with them as a juggler with his balls;

but with Sophocles they hit the mark, like keen and well-aimed arrows."\* His pathos, to express sorrow or suffering, is never exaggerated. In the description of events which have happened off the stage, which he usually places in the mouth of a messenger, Sophocles uses all the graces of poetic art without ever losing sight of the situation. Euripides, on the other hand, often sacrifices probability for rhetorical effect. While in Æschylus the chorus continued to overshadow the action, Sophocles gives due proportion to the lyrical and dramatic elements in a play. The rhythms of his choral odes are softer and more melodious than those of Æschylus. In the subject and general tenor of the thoughts expressed, the odes always stand in close relation to the plot of the piece. Some of them contain reflections on things human and divine characterized by deep insight, accuracy of observation, and simplicity of expression; others, in bolder words and more studied manner, pass sympathetic comments on the development of the drama. Some are praises of the gods or of noble humanity, clothed in splendid language and imagery; others are prayers of devout humility and joyous hope. The *commatic* odes or dirges, which were sung in concert by the chorus and the actors, express with the utmost power, but without any over-accentuation, the two specially tragic

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\* Solger.

emotions, grief and despair. At the close they usually subside into gentle complaint, which finally melts away in a melody of soothing tones and rhythms.

The work of Sophocles is no less apparent in the outward representation of his plays than in their perfect construction. As we have already mentioned, he added a third actor to the two already in use, and even a fourth in his latest pieces, while he also increased the number of the chorus from twelve to fifteen. He improved the costume of the actors, and paid more attention than his predecessors to the correct delineation of his stage scenery.

Sophocles wrote many dramas. Aristophanes of Byzantium gives the number as 130, of which seventeen were spurious. The latter were probably recensions by a later writer. Suidas mentions 123 pieces. Hence it has been suggested that Aristophanes gave seven and not seventeen spurious plays. We still know the titles of more than a hundred lost plays, of which fifteen at least were satyric plays. Of several of these we have fragments, though, as a rule, only unimportant ones. Of the seven tragedies still extant, the *Antigone*, *Ajax*, and perhaps the *Trachiniæ*, belong to the poet's earlier period. The last named in its present form has been rewritten by a later hand, or at all events many interpolations have been added. The others all come into the later years of his life. Sophocles carried off the first prize on more than twenty occa-



sions, the second more often still, but never the third. Besides tragedies he wrote elegies and pæans (which were sung as a prevention against public calamity), epigrams, and a prose work on the chorus. In the works of a writer like Sophocles, who had the good fortune to be able to devote a long life to poetry, and, what is more, almost exclusively to one form of poetry, we may expect to mark the gradual and continuous development of his art. In this connexion Plutarch has preserved for us (*De Prof. in Virt.* cap. vii.) a direct recognition of the fact by the poet.

"As it was said by Sophocles, that he worked off first the pompous sublimity of Æschylus, and next the immaturity and artificiality of his own mannerism, and thus in his third stage introduced a varied style of expression, the best suited for the display of moral character; so, with those who occupy themselves with philosophy, progress in a wisdom real, and not merely dazzling to the eye, begins when they turn from those parts of the study, which are calculated only for display in the schools, to the treatment of moral subjects."\*

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\* ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἔλεγε, τὸν Αἰσχύλον διαπεπαιχῶς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατὰ τεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς, τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς [ποικίλης] λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἶδος, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἠθικώτατον καὶ βελτιστον, οὕτως οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες, ὅταν ἐκ τῶν πανηγυρικῶν καὶ κατὰ τέχνων εἰς τὸν ἀπτόμενον ἥθους καὶ πάθους λόγον μεταβῶσιν, ἄρχονται τὴν ἀληθῆ προκοπὴν καὶ ἄτυφον προκόπτειν.

The words have unfortunately not reached us quite correctly.



Thus the poet himself distinguished three stages in his own development.

One of the seven extant tragedies, the *Trachiniæ*, takes its subject from the Heracleian legendary cycle; three, the *Ajax*, *Philoctetes*, and *Electra*, from the Trojan; and three, the *Ædipus Rex*, *Ædipus Coloneus*, and *Antigone*, from the Theban cycle.

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### "THE WOMEN OF TRACHIS."

Modern critics have found many faults in the construction of the *Women of Trachis* (*Trachiniæ*), and A. W. Schlegel goes so far as to deny its Sophoclean authorship altogether, and to ascribe it to his son Iophon. The main objection taken is that there are two chief characters, Deianeira and Heracles, to divide the interest of the spectators, and that therefore the "unity" of the piece is destroyed.<sup>25</sup> Solger however has rightly judged that the fact of there being two leading parts does not necessarily injure the unity of the action, and he supports his contention by a quotation from Aristotle: "the unity of a story does not depend, as some suppose, on its containing only one

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For διαπεπαιχώς the following are suggested: διαπεπλιχώς, διαπεπλακώς, διαπεφευγώς. There is no doubt however about the meaning. Bergk reads αὐτοῦ for αὐτοῦ and, a little lower, brackets ποικίλης; but the latter emendation is probably not correct. There is clearly a lacuna in the text here.

leading character." The subject of the tragedy of Sophocles is the death of Heracles, who, ere he can become immortal, must let his mortal body perish in the flames. The innocent cause of his death is Deianeira, the loving wife, to whose home Heracles has brought a rival, a captive maiden.

"Her bloom I see  
Still coming on, and mine begins to wane ;  
And well I know the eye is wont to seize  
That blossom fair, and turn the foot from age.  
And so I fear lest Heracles be found  
My lawful spouse, but husband fond and true  
Of her the younger."—*Trach.*, l. 540.

She bears no malice, but seeks to bind him to her for ever by means of a magic gift from Nessus. Her mistake brings death to both: to her because she cannot bear the thought that it was her gift that killed her dear husband; to him, as it had long been foretold him. He should die by the hand of no living man, but of one who had passed to Hades, and should reach the end of labours and be free of all toil (*Trach.* 1160). Thus by his death, brought upon him by the love of a mortal woman, did the god's son expiate the hate with which a goddess had followed all his life. The poet is rather to be praised than blamed for the pains he has taken to emphasise the contrast between Deianeira—a beautiful picture of true womanhood—and the ideal manhood represented by

Heracles. Still it cannot be denied that, in spite of its many isolated beauties, the *Women of Trachis* leaves on the mind a sense of less power than others of the poet's plays.

The scene is laid at Trachis in Thessaly, before Deianeira's palace. At the opening of the play she enters with an attendant, and laments how, since Heracles had won her as his wife in battle with Achelous the river-god, she has had nothing but fears for the course of life that continually sends her husband home and away again on the service of his harsh master.

"And no one knows where now he dwells; for since he slew Iphitus five months and ten have passed, and still no news, so that I fear lest some woe has come on him."

The attendant advises her to send her son Hyllus to seek news of his father. Just as she speaks he enters. His mother tells him that it will bring him shame if he does not seek where his father now dwells, after such length of absence. He tells her that news of his father has just come; he had long served as slave a Lydian lady, but now escaped is warring or is planning war against the town of Eurytus in the land of Eubœa.

Deianeira remembers the oracle which once her husband told her, that in this combat he should reach the goal of life, or else, surviving henceforth, pass his

years in happiness. Therefore let Hyllus go to give his help, since the happiness of all the household is linked with that of Heracles. And Hyllus eagerly consents.

The chorus of Trachinian maidens enter, and ask Helios, the sun-god, where Alcmena's son is now wandering ; for they have long seen with sorrow Deianeira's anxiety for her husband :

“For as in time of storm the sea-waves sweep and rush on, so Fate drags thy husband up and down. Yet doth some god still keep him far from Hades' house. Therefore lose not thy happy hope as yet.

“Not even he who reigns in glory crowned,

The son of Cronos high,

Hath given to men a painless heritage,

But still the whirling courses of the Bear

Bring grief and joy in turn.

For neither does the spangled night remain,

Nor the dark fates nor wealth abide with men :

Quickly they leave this man, and pass to that,

Both joy and loss of joy.

And this, I say that thou our queen should'st have

For ever in thy hopes ;

For who hath known in Zeus forgetfulness

Of those he children calls ? ”

Deianeira trusts that the kindly maidens may never be overladen with care :

“For maiden knows not yet the wife's and mother's cares. When Heracles last went away, he left behind a

written tablet: in this he assigned to wife and children their shares in his goods, if for a year and three months his coming was delayed ; for either he would die within this space of time, or, if he lived, his life would be for ever free from care, unharassed by the gods. Wherefore, my friends, I often start in sweetest sleep from fear that I may live bereft of him, my noble husband."

A messenger enters, and announces that her husband lives, and is returning home victorious from the combat :

"Such is the news that Lichas the herald proclaims ; and Heracles, surrounded by the Malian people, is kept from coming straight to thee. Wherefore, when I heard, I hurried hither to tell thee first, that so I might have thy favour and some small reward."

And at Deianeira's bidding the chorus raise the pæan with shouts of joyous triumph.

Lichas now approaches with a band of captives, and among them Iole daughter of Eurytus ; he tells them he has been sent by Heracles, who is now offering on Eubœa's coast his first-fruits to Zeus for his victory.

"Long time as slave the hero served the Lydian Omphale. Vexed with the shame of this servitude, he made a vow that he would bring beneath the bond-slave's yoke both him who did this wrong and wife and child. And so he led an army against the town of Eurytus, for he had treated him with insult when he

came a guest into his house; and in revenge for this he hurled Iphitus the son of Eurytus down from a lofty mountain crag. And for this fault did Father Zeus send him forth as slave out of the land; for the gods like wanton wrong no better than do men. But now the work of vengeance is complete; dead are they who boasted, and their town enslaved; and when the hero has offered his pure sacrifice to Zeus, he will hasten to his joyous wife."

Deianeira rejoices over her lord's good fortune; but the captives' piteous lot leaves her happiness not without a touch of fear. "For ever sorrow follows close on joy. So now these suffer the doom of slaves, who once lived free and safe. Grant, great Zeus, that like fate may never touch the seed of Heracles!" Most of all is her pity roused by the sight of one fair maid, who seems to be of higher birth. She asks the herald her race and name. He puts the question by, and the maiden is silent too; Deianeira bids her go into the house, where she will use her kindly. "For I will not add fresh grief to those you bear already." Lichas leads the captives into the house; but Deianeira, who is following them, is called back by the messenger, who tells her who the captive is.

"Lichas told thee not the truth just now; for I myself have heard from his own mouth that 'twas for this maiden, Iole, that thy husband slew her father

Eurytus, and sacked his town. Love led him on, and not revenge for his slavery to Omphale. For when her father would not give him her to share his bed, he furbished up some pretext, and marched against her land, slew her father, and sent her, not without a purpose, nor yet as slave, home to his house."

"Ah, woe is me!" cries Deianeira. "And have I, all unthinking, brought mine own undoing into my home?"

When Lichas returns from the house, she asks him who the maiden is, and who her parents. At first he hesitates to tell the truth, but the messenger interferes and compels him.

"Strong passion seized on Heracles, and so her land Æchalia was laid waste. And this he did not bid me hide, but I myself kept silence, fearing to grieve thy heart, dear lady. And now since thou knowest the whole truth, I pray thee treat the maiden well, and do as thou didst promise when first she came."

She promises, and bids Lichas follow her into the house to receive the gifts she had made ready for her lord, for it were not right that he should go back with empty hand who had come in such rich company. The chorus describe the power of Cypris, who beguiles gods and drives men to fierce strife. So strove for Deianeira the mighty strength of the horned river-god Achelous and the Theban son of Zeus; and gladsome Cythera

stood by to judge the combat. Fierce was the fight, and the gracious maiden sat on her lofty seat, anxiously awaiting her appointed lord. Then following the victor, she went from her mother away.

Deianeira appears again, and tells the chorus her trouble and resolve :

“No maid is this, but wife, my husband sends into my house, and thus repays my wifely love. Yet can I not be wroth with him ; for men are oft smitten with like malady, and I know well that my charms are fading, and that a man’s eye is wont to be caught by the young and fair. And so I fear that she will be his wife in very truth, I but in name. So without anger have I sought to free me from this trouble by the gift which once the rough-haired Nessus gave me when a girl. For he was wont to carry across for pay men that chanced to pass Evenus’ stream ; and when I came from my father’s house as bride of Heracles, he bore me on his shoulders, but in midstream laid rude hands on me. Hearing my cry, the son of Zeus pierced him with swift arrow, and, dying, he said : ‘Child of Æneus, if thou wilt follow my advice, thou shalt have some profit from thy journey, since thou art the last I shall carry. Take the fresh blood upon the arrow, which once was dipped in poison of the Lernæan hydra, and it shall be a love-charm for thy husband’s heart, and he shall never look on other woman



or love her more than thee.' Long has it lain at home. But just now I dipped this robe in it, and by this love-charm I shall overcome this maiden."

The chorus approve her resolve, but doubt the efficacy of her means.

"Soon shall we know," says Deianeira; "for, lo! here is Lichas, who shall take it to him."

She hands the robe to the herald, and bids him give it to her husband as a present from her hands.

"Before him must no mortal wear it on his flesh, nor must the sun or firelight shine upon it, before he shows it to the gods at the time of sacrifice. So have I vowed, that when he came home safe, he should celebrate new sacrifice in this new robe."

She gives the servant her seal-ring as a token, bidding him tell that all stands well in the house, and that she has received the captive maid in friendly way.

"My fear is lest thou should'st tell my longing for him too soon, since I cannot know if he longs for me."

They leave the stage, and the chorus raise a song in honour of the mighty demi-god, who, with trophies of his valour, hastens home, long looked for and awaited by his wife with fear and tears.

"At last has Ares freed her from the troubled time. And may he return from the sacrifice, fast bound to his wife, as the Centaur foretold, by the charm."

Deianeira returns, trembling with fear lest what she has done prove a curse :

“For the lock of white wool wherewith I smeared the robe had scarce been touched by the sun’s rays than it withered into dust, foaming just like the must in ferment. Ah ! then all too late, alas ! I knew that the dying monster wished me not well, but meant through me to take his vengeance on him who smote him. For the arrow slew each one it touched ; and can it be that the black blood-venom shall not slay him too ? Then is my mind resolved : if I have slain him, with him I will die. For I will ne’er endure to live a life of shame.”

The chorus advise her first to await the consequences of her act ; and there is the less reproach for her, since she had erred not willingly.

Hyllus enters, and covers his mother with reproaches :

“This day hast thou murdered the best of fathers ! I found him on Eubœa’s mountain promontory, Cenæum, there about to offer sacrifice. Thither Lichas brought thy robe, and he, arrayed in it, as thou didst wish, began the sacrifice, and in happy mood he prayed, rejoicing in thy gift. But when the flames flared up from the altar, the tunic fell close round his limbs, as though soldered by a smith, and frightful twitchings went through his bones, and, with a horrible shriek, he

called the hapless messenger. Lichas did protest his innocence: he had given the robe just as thou didst give it him. Then Heracles, maddened with the pain, seized him by the feet, and hurled him on the sea-washed rocks, so that his brain and blood gushed from his head. And a shudder ran through all who saw, yet none dare approach the maddened sufferer. He kept falling to the earth and rising again, with cries and shrieks which all the rocks re-echoed round. And as he grew weaker, he cursed thee, his wife, the daughter of Æneus, that had brought about his death. And seeing me, he cried, 'Come here, my son; flee not from my agony; and if thou pitiest me, bear me from this land, that at least I die not here.' So we have brought him here; and on thee may Justice take vengeance for his death, for thou hast foully slain the noblest man of all the earth, whose like man shall not look upon again."

Deianeira goes out in silence. Hyllus too leaves the stage, full of anger towards his mother.

The chorus recognise the awful manner in which has come fulfilment of the god's words, that after the twelfth complete period the begotten of Zeus should find rest from his toil:

"He sinks to death, with poison stricken; for she, unfortunate one! gave no heed to the double meaning of the words of Nessus, whence came this issue of dread doom. Now she laments and sheds plenteous tears, that

Fate has made clear her fatal error. Such woeful suffering has Cypris done, and dumbly working has brought to light of day."

A sound of wailing comes from within ; new woe has fallen on the house. Deianeira's nurse rushes out with troubled face, crying that her mistress is dead. By her own hand she has taken her life with a sword, since she could not face such great calamity.

"For when she saw her son in the court-yard making ready for the bearing of the body, she fled into the house where none could see her. She fell before the altar, wailing how desolate she was, and wandered round her rooms in frenzy, crying loud if perchance she saw some faithful servant lamenting her awful fate. And when this ceased, suddenly she rushed upon the marriage-bed, and there sitting began with streaming tears,

‘ Ah ! my bridal bower and bed !  
Henceforth, farewell ; for never more shall ye  
Receive me in this couch a slumberer !’

Loosening the golden buckles of her dress, she bared her left side. I hurried off to call her son, and quickly we returned, but found the unhappy wife had slain herself, pierced just at the heart. Her son saw it, and groaned (for well he knew his anger had driven her to this), learning too late from those within the house that she was innocent. Vain his wailing

over her ; vain his kisses, his tears, and his embraces ; vainly he repents that he had falsely charged her with this guilt, that he must live his life bereft of father and of mother. Such changes hath man's fortune !”

The maidens raise their lament, uncertain which calamity is the more grievous. They wish that they were far away, that they may not perish of grief when they see the woes of the mighty son of Zeus. Already is he there, borne by careful hands of friends, who come with hushed tread. His cries of woe are silenced. Is he dead ? or lies he deep in sleep ? Hyllus comes to meet them with mourning cries ; but the aged leader bids him be silent, and not wake the sufferer to his terrible agony. But Hyllus cannot restrain his grief ; his father wakes, and gives vent anew to cries of pain.

“What charmer, what skilled leech,  
Less than great Zeus himself,  
Will soothe this direst woe ?  
Far off is that wonder to see.

Ah ! Ah !

Leave me to sleep ; yes, leave me, wretched one !

Leave me to sleep my sleep.

Where dost thou touch me ? Where move ?

Death thou wilt bring ; yea, bring death.”

Now the agony seizes him again. He reproaches the Hellenes for their ingratitude ; for them he freed sea and forest of all manner of monsters, and yet now that he lies sore smitten before them, none of them

will bring the fire or the sword that would end his suffering. His son approaches. He bids him cleave his neck asunder, and so heal the pain which the godless woman had caused.

“For what neither the spouse of Zeus nor Eurystheus’ hate could do, that my wife’s guile has done! I am slain, not by an armed host, nor troop of giants, nor the wild beasts of the forest, nor by Greek nor barbarian, but by a woman in a woman’s way, alone, without a sword! As noble son, give her, Hyllus, to my vengeance. Thou seest me weeping like a girl, me, who once could bear all pain without a groan!”

The pain becomes worse and worse.

“Oh may Zeus blast me with his thunderbolt! I have waged a thousand fights victorious; and now I die, the far-famed son of Zeus, this dark and mysterious death. Yet will I smite her who brought me to this pass. She shall learn that I, in life or death, punish guilt.”

Hyllus tells him that she is dead by her own hand:

“She sinned, desiring good; she did but wish to keep thy love, when thy new marriage was told her. Nessus it was who cheated her, and gave the poison as a love-charm.”

“Oh! now I know that I have reached life’s limit; for to me long since great Zeus revealed that I

should die by hand of none that live, but one of the dead should slay me. Thus was this day ordained to end my woes, and thereby signified the end of life. My son, thou must on Cæta's topmost peak build me a funeral pyre, and, with friendly arms, place me thereon ; and then with pine-wood torch must fire it, without a groan or tear."

The son is loth to light the pyre of wood with his own hand ; another shall do it. And this satisfies his father.

"But add a little favour to these greater ; thou must take to wife the young Iole, daughter of Eurytus."

Hyllus makes excuse. Who would care to bring into the house her who caused a mother's death ? The father threatens his son, if undutiful, with the curses of the gods ; and so he promises.

"Now," says Heracles, "raise me up before the pain return, that I may find rest from agony, and attain my goal."

Then accompanied by the chorus, Hyllus and his comrades bear him away, recognising that Zeus has so ordered all things.

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"AJAX."

In the tragic fate of one of the noblest of the Greek heroes before Troy, Ajax son of Telamon, the poet shows us the common lot of mortals :

"For this I see, that we, all we that live,  
Are but vain phantoms, shadows fleeting fast."

Therefore should mortal never utter impious words against the gods, nor boast, though he himself should excel in strength or riches.

"All human things  
A day lays low, a day lifts up again :  
But still the gods love those of ordered soul,  
And hate the evil."

In bitter wrath that the Atridæ have decided the contest for the arms of Achilles in favour of Odysseus, Ajax resolved to slay all the Argive leaders. One night he had reached the folding door of the general's tent, when Athena turned him aside, casting a glamour over his eyes. He rushed on the flocks, slaying or seizing bulls and rams, in the belief that he was taking vengeance on his enemies.

When the play opens he has returned to his tent, and Odysseus is approaching cautiously, having already heard of what has happened in the night and the suspicions that have fallen upon Ajax. Athena approaches Odysseus, and tells him what she has just



done for him and the Argive leaders. At her call Ajax appears, and thanks her for his imagined victory. "Never more shall the Atridæ do me wrong, and Odysseus I have fastened up within, that he may die a shameful death beneath the scourge." He returns within his tent, and even Odysseus is touched with pity for his enemy.

Both leave the stage, and the chorus of sailors from Salamis enter, troubled by rumours of their master's mad act. They doubt whether it is true, or some invention of his enemies to disgrace him; therefore they hope that he will stay no longer in his tent, but rather come forth to defend his followers from insult.

Tecmessa, daughter of Teleutas the Phrygian, now captive and wife of Ajax, enters from the tent, and confirms the fears of the chorus :

"His mind is now restored to him; and when he saw the slaughter in the tent he groaned and smote his head; then sitting speechless, he tore out his hair with his nails, then threatened me unless I told him all the truth. And when he heard, he cried and made lament as he has never done before, and then refused all food and drink, planning some dreadful deed. Therefore, my friends, come in and help me; perchance the words of friends may change his thoughts."

Ajax is heard crying from the tent, calling for his

son, his brother. Tecmessa opens the tent, and Ajax, seeing his friends, begs them to slay him :

“Never yet has such shame fallen on me, that I, who ever faced the foe fearless in fight, should now have shown my prowess on these poor harmless beasts. Well may my enemies laugh at me in their delight ! Would that I might slay them, then die myself ! For I, like to whom Troy has found no other hero, am stricken with dishonour ! Can I go home ? How can I look Telamon, my father, in the face, if I return without the victor’s spoil, when he himself came back with glory’s noblest crown ? Shall I go alone against the Trojan walls, and there seek death in noble combat ? That would but gladden the Atridæ. No ; I must seek some perilous enterprise, that may show my father that I am no degenerate scion of his stock. Either noble life or noble death becomes the brave.”

Tecmessa begs him not to leave her unprotected :

“With my little son I should be made serve, and must bear the bitter taunt, that I—once consort of the bravest—should fall so low. Have some thought too for thy poor aged parents, for they pray the gods that they may live to see thee home again. Pity too thy child, who, if he lose sight of his father, must find unkindly guardians. And, lastly, think of me ; for I have nothing but thy love. Yea, ’twas thy hand laid low my city ; it was my father’s fate, and my

mother's, to pass into the realms of Hades. Therefore my only hope of safety lies in thee ! ”

Ajax asks for his son Eurysaces, whom his mother has taken away in fear of his father's madness. A servant brings him, and Ajax lets him gaze upon the new-shed blood, that he may bear himself as a hero's son.

“Time will accustom thee to thy father's savage ways.

“O boy, mayst thou be happier than thy sire,  
In all things else be like him. And not bad  
Wouldst thou be then. And yet thy lot e'en now  
Doth move my envy, that thou feelest naught  
Of all these evils. Sweetest life is found  
In those unconscious years ere yet thou know  
Or joy or sorrow.

“Then wilt thou show whose son thou art. Meantime let thy life bud mid gentle breezes, to thy mother's joy. My brother Teucer will live to guard thee, and my friends here too, my comrades in the fight, who come from our island home. They shall take thee to Telamon, my father, and to my mother Eriboea, that thou mayst be a comfort to their age until they pass into the nether world. I leave thee on the earth my unconquered shield ; my other arms I would have buried with me. Now go into the tent, and shed no wailing tears for what shall come.”

He refuses to listen to the prayers of the chorus and

his wife, and enters his tent; Tecmessa and the child follow. The chorus lament their fate:

“Here in the land of Ida, far from my home, must I live on, in fear that soon I shall see the dread halls of Hades. And now I sorrow much for Ajax, mighty in battle, and now the Atridæ turn to scorn his brave deeds of former days. With wailing will his aged mother cry, beating her breast and rending her gray hair, when she hears her son's wild frenzy, more terrible than death. Unhappy father, what a tale of woe awaits thee, such as no one yet has borne of all the sons of Æacus!”

Ajax enters with Tecmessa:

“At last Tecmessa has moved my stern resolve. I cannot leave my wife and child widowed and orphaned among my foes. And now I go to bathe where the meadows edge the sea; there to cleanse my hand from stain, and avert the goddess's dire wrath. There will I bury deep in the earth my sword, hateful weapon and deadly gift, which once I had from Hector's hands. Thus I yield to those above, and learn to reverence the Atridæ, and loyally to help my friends. And thou, Tecmessa, go into thy tent, and pray the gods that they may grant fulfilment of my heart's desire. And should Teucer come, charge him that he think of me and care for those I love.

“For now I go the journey I must take ;  
And ye, do what I bid you, and perchance  
Ye soon may hear of me, though now my fate  
Is evil, as delivered from all ill.”

The chorus are thrilled with delight, and shout for joy :

“May Pan appear from Cyllene’s snowy heights, and lead the dance of joy ; and thou, Apollo, come from Delos ; for Ares has loosed the anxious darkness from our eyes, and Zeus has brought the brightness of the dawn. Now Ajax worships the gods with mind at rest, and all unexpected now has turned from bitter wrath and hatred of the Atridæ.”

A messenger enters :

“Just now came Teucer back from Mysia, and as he passed through the middle of the camp the host insulted him, reproaching him for his brother’s murderous attempt. They hurled stones at him, and threatening drew their swords forth from their scabbards, so that the counsel of the aged men could scarce quiet them. Therefore have I hastened hither, that Ajax may know of this.”

The messenger hears that Ajax is gone, and says with loud lament :

“Calchas with kindly thought urged Teucer to keep Ajax in his tent for this one day, for on this day only would Pallas’ wrath pursue him. The gods are

angry with him for the proud words he spake when his father warned him, at his departing, ever to seek victory with the gods' help. For he replied,—

“My father, with God's help a man of naught  
Might victory win ; but I, I trust, shall grasp  
Without their aid that glory for myself.”

“And when another time Athena's word urged him to the fight, he would not be obedient. With words like these, and thoughts unmeet for mortals, he roused the wrath of the gods against him. Yet if he but survive this day, he may perchance, with the gods' help, gain deliverance.”

The chorus call Tecmessa, who hears the messenger's tidings. She hurries forth in great distress to seek her husband, and bids her friends with all haste search every bay of the coast, if so they may save a man who has gone out to seek his death.

The scene changes to a deserted place on the sea-shore. Ajax enters alone. He sharpens anew his sword, Hector's gift, on a stone, and fixes the hilt in the ground ; then, when all is ready for his death, he calls on Zeus :

“To Teucer send swift message, that a brother's hands may raise my corpse, and that my enemies may not find me, and cast me forth a prey to dogs and birds. I call on thee, Hermes, to grant me peaceful end ; and you, Erinyes, to avenge my death on the Atridæ, that

they may fall slain by their dearest kindred ; and, lastly, thee I call, bright Helios, to tell my aged parents of my sorrows and my doom. Bitter cries will my mother raise through all the city. But now is not the time for vain lament, but for speedy act.

“Come, and look on me,  
O Death, O Death !—and yet in yonder world  
I shall dwell with thee, speak enough with thee.  
And thee I call, thou light of golden day,  
Thou Sun, who drivest on thy glorious car,  
Thee, for this last time, never more again.  
O Light, O sacred land that was my home ;  
O Salamis, where stands my father’s hearth,  
Thou glorious Athens, with thy kindred race ;  
Ye streams and rivers here, and Troïa’s plains,  
To you that fed my life I bid farewell ;  
This last, last word does Aias speak to you ;  
All else I speak in Hades to the dead.”

He hurls himself upon his sword.

The chorus enter, seeking him ; Tecmessa too comes and sees her husband’s corpse. Both raise a dirge over the dead. Then Teucer arrives ; he has heard rumours of his brother’s death. He bids them bring the son of Ajax, and laments the ill-fate of son and father.

“When I go home, our father will upbraid me, that I in coward fashion did abandon thee, my brother, seeking the dead man’s heritage and power ; and then will he drive me from my native land.”

Menelaus then enters, and forbids them to give the

body funeral rite or burial ; let him lie stretched out upon the white sea-sand, a prey to the birds of heaven. In vain the chorus tell him to show some reverence for the dead, and Teucer threatens to give his brother burial in spite of his command. After a fierce argument Menelaus retires.

Tecmessa enters with her son. Teucer bids him as a suppliant embrace his father's body, and hold in his hand locks of hair cut from the child, his mother, and Teucer himself, as offerings to the dead :

“ And should one in all the host dare to tear thee from the dead, may he die unburied, cut off with all his race, just as now I cut off this lock of hair. I go to make a grave for my brother, and none shall hinder me.”

The chorus lament :

“ Unending is woe in Trojan land ! Would that he had vanished in air or sunk into Hades who first taught man the use of arms and war ! For he that lays men low gives no garlands, no joy of flowing cup at banquet, no sound of flute, nor kindly rest of night. At night the soldier lies wakeful and lonely, his hair all wet with dew. Till now has Ajax aye been our shield ; but now a hateful doom has taken him, and with him goes all joy. Would that we could flee to Sunium's sea-washed cliffs, and once more greet our holy Athens ! ”



Teucer returns, and soon after Agamemnon enters. Their dispute about the burial of Ajax is interrupted by Odysseus. He blames Agamemnon for refusing burial to such a man, who, if their enemy, was yet the best and bravest of the Grecian host, saving Achilles only. "Most wrong would it be that he should suffer outrage at our hands."

At last Agamemnon unwillingly consents, and Odysseus offers Teucer his aid in burying the hero. Teucer declines his help, as perchance unwelcome to the dead; but he will ever esteem Odysseus for his generous spirit.

The funeral procession starts. Brother and son together bear the dead. "Let all," says Teucer, "who count themselves his friends show it in labouring for him, who in all was good, and none better than he."

The chorus follow, saying :

"Men may know many things on seeing them ;  
But, ere they come in sight,  
No man is prophet of the things that come,  
To tell how he shall fare."

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Fault has been frequently found with the concluding scenes of the *Ajax*, and the prolongation of the play after the death of the hero ; and it has even been asserted that these scenes destroy the "unity" of the action. But we may compare with this the close of the *Iliad*, which does not end with the death of Hector, but

goes on to describe the funeral rites of Patroclus, the banquets, the dirges, and the burial. So in the same way the tragedian could not break off with the death of Ajax; the hero himself expresses a fear that, unless Teucer sets to work at once, his burial will be prevented (l. 827 *seq.*). In reference to this point Bernhardt well remarks: "The poet could not end the play with the death of the hero. Although he renounces life to escape his shame, yet the feeling of impiety in his act still challenges opposition. The punishing hand can reach beyond the grave; his human judge may still exact vengeance by forbidding burial. This very fact is utilized to mark a turning-point in the drama. The dispute about the burial, which resolves itself into a question of what is just, shows us that the goddess is appeased; from the mouth of her favourite captain the fallen hero receives a eulogy, which brings his services to mind, and affords honourable satisfaction to all."

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### "PHILOCTETES."

In the *Philoctetes* the poet shows us a man struggling with both mental and bodily ills. Philoctetes is a true hero of the Homeric age, natural and unsophisticated; he is not ashamed of the cries which the pain of his wounds wrings from his lips, but he will allow his pain no power over his mind. "His cries are those of a

man, his actions those of a hero ; together they form the heroic man, who is neither weak nor strong, and yet shows himself each in turn as nature or duty requires. He is the highest ideal which wisdom can present to us, or art can imitate" (Lessing). The play received the first prize in the archonship of Glaucippus, 410 B.C.

Philoctetes the son of Pœas had been bitten in the foot by a poisonous viper, and on the way to Troy left behind asleep on the desolate shore of Lemnos by the advice of the Atridæ and Odysseus, because his cries of pain continually filled the camp, and interfered with all the festivals of the gods. For ten years he had lived there under the burden of his misery, when this oracle was given to the Greeks : "The city of Troy shall never fall but through Neoptolemus son of Achilles, with the bow of Heracles, and with Philoctetes, who has it."

Odysseus therefore has come with Neoptolemus to Lemnos, and, reaching the cave of Philoctetes, finds that it is empty, containing merely a few necessaries of life. Odysseus bids Neoptolemus send an attendant to obtain further news, and then shows him what trickery he must use to beguile the hero. But the young man despises a lie. "I will take the man by force ; I was not born to practise tricks. It were an easy thing to overcome a cripple."

"Not deeds, but words prevail at last with men," answers Odysseus. "By guile alone can we take Philoc-

tetes, for his bow unerring, bringing death, protects him. So, if thou wouldst master Troy, thou must, as Fate has destined, procure this bow, and that by guile ; and then thou shalt be known as wise and good." The youth declares himself ready, and Odysseus promises to send an attendant dressed as a seaman to help him. With a prayer to Hermes and Athena for help, he goes out.

Neoptolemus bids the sailors who form the chorus look around, and, should they see the dweller in the cave, hurry to his help. The miserable home and sad fate of the abandoned hero rouse their pity. "Far from all human help or friendly eye, alone with the wild beasts the noble hero lies in endless torment, a prey to pain and hunger, here where only echo can repeat his cries."

"His sufferings and his abandonment," explains Neoptolemus, "come from a god,

"That he may not Troia destroy  
With darts of gods none can resist  
Ere the time run on to its close,  
When, as they say, it is doomed  
To be by those weapons subdued."

Meanwhile Philoctetes enters, and asks who the strangers are ; and he rejoices much to hear that they are Greeks. He tells his name, and describes to them how the Greeks once left him there, and what ill he suffers from the cruel deed of Odysseus and the Atridæ.

In this reviling of the Greek leaders Neoptolemus pretends to join.

“Me too, O son of Pœas, have they wronged. For when they brought me from Scyros to Troy—since it was said that through none but me should the city fall—they refused to give me, his son, my father’s weapons, promised to Laertes’ son; and so in wrath I now am sailing home to Scyros.”

“By thy sire, by thy mother, I pray thee, by all that is most dear to thee, leave me not alone in my misery! Take me with thee, even if the freight be noisome to thee. Put me in the worst part of the ship, where I shall least molest thy sailors, only do not leave me in my misery; on my knees I beg thee. For it is meet for him that knows not suffering to help a sufferer.”

The chorus join their prayers with his; gladly would they put up with the burden of the sick man. Neoptolemus promises to take him. Philoctetes shouts for joy; let him but take one last farewell of the inhospitable land so long his home.

The attendant enters disguised as a trader.

“I come,” he says, “from trafficking at Troy. There I learnt that the Greeks have sent a fleet, led by Phœnix and the sons of Theseus, to bring thee, Neoptolemus, back. Odysseus too, with Tydeus’ son, was sent to seek another, the noble Philoctetes; for Helenus son

of Priam prophesied that Troy should not fall except through him."

As soon as Philoctetes hears this, he urges Neoptolemus to hasten :

"Little have I to take with me: a herb I use to soothe the pain of my wound, and all that may belong to my bow."

He holds in his hands the bow which Heracles once gave him. Neoptolemus hearing this, asks to see it nearer, to hold it in his hand and kiss it, as though it were a god. Philoctetes hands him his precious possession without demur :

"Take it then, but give it back to me, and boast that thou alone of men hast for thy virtue touched these weapons. For I too gained them by a kind deed, wherefore I refuse not that he should touch them who has treated me with kindness."

They enter the cave together, and the chorus, with deep pity, liken the pain of Philoctetes to the punishment of Ixion and his ever-revolving wheel :

"Yet he gave Zeus full cause for wrath; but this man here, who did no wrong or violence, but lived just among the just, is brought thus low, though innocent of all offence. How could he endure his lamentable doom! Alone, and powerless to move his limb, with no neighbour to console or help, he could not eat the

earth's fair fruits, nor food of men, save what his arrow slew. He could not drink sweet draught of wine, but water from the standing pools. But now the son of a noble sire shall take him away from such piteous ills. The ship shall take him home to Spercheius' banks, whence Heracles departed to the gods in flashing flames from *Æta*."

Neoptolemus and Philoctetes return from the cave. The latter is groaning with agony, but suppresses it, and at first denies it. At last he cannot conceal it. Prostrated by his misery, he begs Neoptolemus to cut off his foot with his sword, caring nothing more for life. He gives him his bow and arrows, and bids him keep them and guard them from his foes, till the agony of his wound be soothed by slumber, which alone can allay it. The pain grows worse. He calls on his friend to consume him in fire, as he once did himself for the son of Zeus. In the excess of his anguish his senses leave him. He throws himself to the ground, covered with sweat; the dark blood bursts from his foot, and at last he falls into deep slumber. "Now is the time," the chorus advise their master, "to execute thy design, while the poor wretch sleeps."

Neoptolemus is shamed by the deception he has practised; and the bow would be but fruitless spoil, were he left there whom the god bade them to bring also.

Philoctetes wakes, and thanks his friends for their true care. He wishes to hasten their departure. Neoptolemus hesitates whether to carry on the deception or to tell him the truth. Truth conquers, and he says :

“Hither I came to take thee back to Troy, fulfilling the behest of the captains of the Achæan host.”

“Lost and betrayed am I,” cries Philoctetes ; “and by him who promised me help and rescue, worthless son of a noble father ! Give me back my bow ; for without this I lack the means of life, and shall myself be slain by such things as once I slew.”

Neoptolemus is moved, and, undecided what to do, asks his companions their advice. Suddenly Odysseus appears ; Philoctetes recognises him. He demands the bow back again. Impossible ! Odysseus will take him off by force, if he will not follow of his own free will. Then Philoctetes resolves to hurl himself from the rock upon the rocks below. He is prevented by the strangers, and assails them with bitter curses. Odysseus bids them let him go.

“Stay then on Lemnos, if thou wilt ; we need thy weapons, not thyself. Others too, Teucer and I, can draw thy bow, and the praise, which would have been thine, will fall to me.”

Philoctetes turns to Neoptolemus and his comrades and entreats them :



“ Shall I remain, Achilles’ son, without a word from thee? Wilt thou too desert me? My friends, will ye not pity me? ”

Neoptolemus is touched to the heart, and as he is leaving with Odysseus, bids his companions remain until the ship is ready: “ Perchance he may think better of it.” The hero groans:

“ Alas! now shall I never leave the cave of hollow rock! - My doom is here! Here must I dwell in want and misery, despised and outraged by my enemies. O bow, if thou couldst feel, well wouldst thou pity me; and thou wouldst hate to serve these men of many wiles. Fearlessly can the birds that fly high in heaven approach my cave, and troops of fierce beasts, since gone is my strength and lost my bow. Come quick and glut yourselves on my flesh, since soon my life must end.”

The chorus beg him to yield and come with them to Troy. Philoctetes in anger bids them leave him; but when they turn to go he cries again:

“ Oh pity me! stay with me here; for I cannot come with you, even if Zeus threaten to blast me with his thunderbolt. Grant me one boon; give me a sword or any weapon, that I may strike off my head, and go to find a home in Hades.”

He retires into the cave, and Odysseus and Neop-

tolemus return. The latter comes to undo the wrong he has done. He will return to Philoctetes the bow obtained by deception. Odysseus threatens him with the anger of the Greeks, but all in vain :

“My cause being just, I fear not that thy fear.”

Odysseus seizes his sword ; Neoptolemus draws also. Odysseus retires from the fight, but threatens to tell all to the host, that they may punish him.

Neoptolemus then calls Philoctetes from his cave, saying :

“I would that thou hadst hearkened to my words ; but if thy mind is firm, I give thee back thy bow and arrows.”

Odysseus again appears to hinder him. Too late ! Philoctetes has the bow already, and would have pierced him with an arrow, had not Neoptolemus stayed his hand :

“Mortals must bear the fate that heaven sends ; but those who choose the ills they suffer have little claim to pardon or compassion. Thou wilt not take advice given in pure goodwill ; and yet, in the name of Zeus, I call on thee to hear my words. This pain has come on thee from heaven, whereof shalt thou never be free, until of thine own free will thou goest to Ilium. There will the sons of Asklepios free thee from thy pain, and Troy will fall by means of thee and me

and this bow. All this has Helenus foretold ; for there shalt thou both be healed from thy wound and gain the glory of the taking of Troy."

It is all in vain. Philoctetes will not meet again his hated enemies, Odysseus and the Atridæ.

"And wouldst thou go back to Troy thyself, to those who took from thee thy father's arms? Nay; as thou didst swear, take me on thy ship, and lead me to my home."

"To my oath I will be true," says Neoptolemus. "Come, let us go! But how wilt thou guard me and my country against the Achæans' hate?"

"With these, the arm of Heracles, I will keep them away."

As they are leaving Heracles appears in the air :

"Nay, not yet ;  
Not till thou hear my words,  
Thou son of Pœas old ;  
Own that thou hear'st the voice of Heracles  
And look'st upon his face.  
Lo, for thy sake I come,  
Leaving my heavenly home,  
To tell thee of the thoughts of Zeus on high,  
And to close up the way  
On which thou journeyest now.  
List thou to these my words.

And going with this youth to Troïa's town,  
First thou shalt respite find from thy sore plague,  
And, for thy valour chosen from the host,  
Shalt with my arrows take away the life

Of Paris, who was cause of all these ills,  
 And shalt sack Troïa, and shalt send its spoils  
 To thine own dwelling (gaining highest prize  
 Of valour in the army) by the plains  
 Of Cæta, where thy father Pœas dwells.  
 And all the spoils thou gainest in this war,  
 As true thank-offering for these darts of mine,  
 Lay thou upon my grave. And now to thee,  
 Achilles' son, I this declare: Nor thou  
 Apart from him, nor he apart from thee,  
 May Troïa take. But ye, as lions twain  
 That roam together, guard thou him, he thee.  
 And I will send as healer of thy wounds  
 Asklepios to Ilium. Yet once more  
 By this my bow must it be captured. Then  
 (Give heed to this), when ye the land lay waste,  
 Show all religious reverence to the gods;  
 For all things else our father Zeus counts less."

Philoctetes promises obedience, joyfully takes a long farewell of Lemnos, and hastens with Neoptolemus to the ship. The chorus follow, praying the Nymphs of the sea to grant them a prosperous voyage.

The *Philoctetes* is the only play of Sophocles in which the *dénoûment* is effected by the intervention of a god, the *deus ex machina*. Another ending was hardly possible after the manner in which the poet had emphasized Philoctetes' unyielding nature.

Dio Chrysostomos in the second century was able to compare the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles with that of Æschylus and that of Euripides. He rightly<sup>26</sup> gave

his preference to the play of Sophocles, on the ground of its deeply tragic arrangement and masterly delineation of character.

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“ELECTRA.”

The subject of the *Electra* is the same as that of the *Mourning Women* of Æschylus, but in Sophocles play *Electra* takes the place of Orestes as the chief character. The vengeance exacted by Orestes for his father's murder, which forms the motive of the *Mourning Women*, is replaced in Sophocles by the rescue of his sister. Thus the stern natural law of the one dramatist is replaced in the other by the moral duty of a noble nature. Sophocles claims all our sympathies for the figure of the suffering heroine. As long as she has confidence in Orestes' final help she meets indignity and insult with a splendid courage, but the news of his death shatters all her hopes. At one time she resolves, in her despair and isolation, “to let her life waste away, and if any of those within is wroth at this, let him slay her straight, for all her wish for life is gone” (l. 809 *seq.*); at another, she plans herself to do the work of vengeance, and thus nobly save herself or die (l. 973). Then unexpectedly Orestes appears to avenge and rescue. Thus his terrible deed receives a new justification, in that he not only expiates the blood of his murdered father, but also rescues the heroic and suffer-

ing Electra from her gaolers, the unsexed mother and the cowardly Ægisthus. Hence no Furies dare pursue one who has freed his house and delivered his sister; he is himself, as it were, an Erinys who punishes the deed of blood and the consequent exposure of Electra to scorn and trouble—Electra, who “in the fear and love of Zeus won the foremost place in following his best and greatest laws” (l. 1095).

It is said that at a later performance of the *Electra* the actor Polos played the title-part—female characters, since their introduction by Phrynichus, being in classical times always played by men. In the scene where Electra, holding the urn which contains her brother’s ashes, mourns for him, Polos is said to have used the funeral urn of his own son, who had died shortly before, and thus to have invested his acting with a pathetic realism (Gell. vi. 5).

The scene of the play is laid in front of Agamemnon’s palace at Mycenæ. An old attendant, who after Agamemnon’s death had received Orestes from his sister’s hands, and reared him up to avenge his father’s death, has led Orestes and his friend Pylades to Argos, “for now has come the time for action.” Orestes thanks his guardian for his faithfulness, and unveils his purpose. The god at Delphi told him to wreak his vengeance by guile, without arms or armament. Therefore he asks the old man to enter the house and announce his news. A stranger, he must say, has come hither from Phocis,

at the bidding of Phanoteus, their true ally, to tell them that Orestes had been hurled from his chariot at the races at Pytho, and had thus died a violent death. They two will go to his father's grave, and there, pouring libations, will deck the tomb with locks of hair. Then they will return with a brazen urn, bringing joyful news and evidence that Orestes' body has been consumed by fire, and is now ashes.

From the house come loud cries of wailing. Orestes suspects that Electra is near, but the attendant hastens him away to offer the sacrifice to his father. "For this shall bring our undertaking victory and strength."

Electra enters from the palace and makes lament :

"The holy light and all-surrounding air, which ere this oft have heard my cries of woe, hear me only wailing for my hapless sire, whom his own wife and her paramour smote in foul and grievous death.

But I at least will ne'er  
Refrain my eyes from weeping, while I live,  
Nor yet my voice from wail ;  
Not while I see this day  
And yon bright twinkling stars ;  
But like a nightingale  
Of its young brood bereaved,  
Before the gates I speak them forth to all.  
O house of Hades and Persephone,  
O Hermes of the abyss, and thou, dread Curse,  
And ye Erinyes, daughters of the gods,  
Ye dreaded ones, who look  
On all who perish, slain unrighteously,

On all whose bed is stealthily defiled,  
Come ye, and help, avenge my father's death ;  
Send me my brother here."

The chorus, maidens of Mycenæ, enter and speak words of comfort and encouragement to Electra, whose only task is now to wail her murdered father and her long tarrying brother. She tells her dear companions the ills she daily must endure : her mother's enmity, Ægisthus' hate, bitter want, and the pain of seeing his murderer sitting as king on her father's throne, spouse of that shameless woman.

"They make a festival of that sad day on which she slew my father, and I am forced to hide my tears ; then (a thing incredible) she mocks my grief, and accuses me of Orestes' flight, saying that I have stolen him away and sent him far from home. And now, alas ! daily my hopes grow less and less, ever awaiting help from Orestes' hand ! I had not ventured out of the palace doors just now, were not Ægisthus gone from home !"

Her sister Chrysothemis approaches, bearing funeral offerings in her hands. She chides Electra :

"Wilt thou not learn to hide thine anger in thine heart ? I too am grieved by what has passed ; yet now I think it well to draw in sail, and make no idle show of doing something when I can accomplish naught."

Electra is ashamed of such a coward mind :



“What profit should I have, if I were silent? I live, evilly indeed, and yet it is enough for me; and I envy not thine abundance, which thou sharest with our enemies. Be this my only solace, ever to be true to mine own heart. I covet not thine honour; for when thou mightest be called daughter of most noble father, yet dost thou prefer to be called thy *mother's* child. All shall deem thee base, a traitress to thy dead father and his friends.”

Then Chrysothemis :

“Learn then the punishment in store for thee, unless thou ceaseest from thy wailings. Far away wilt thou be sent, where thou shalt see no more the light of day. Wherefore take good heed before Ægisthus return.”

And Electra :

“Vain these threats. Happiness would it be to be far from you all; and never in my life will I submit myself to the base.”

Chrysothemis advances towards her father's grave with the libations. Electra asks who sends them, and she tells how in a dream Clytæmnestra saw her husband return, and plant his sceptre firmly on the hearth; thence there sprang a sturdy branch, which cast its shade over all Mycenæ. And so she sent the gifts in fear. Electra blames her purpose :

“Of all these offerings put nothing on the tomb;

rather give them as a tribute to the winds, or hide them in the dust. For never would the dead give kindly welcome to such gifts from her who slew him. Rather cut a lock from the crown of thy head, and mine too, and offer them with this poor girdle; and, falling prone, pray that our father will come from out the earth to help us, and will send Orestes, that he may trample underfoot his enemies, and may hereafter honour him with bounteous gifts."

Chrysothemis promises to follow her advice, but she asks for strictest silence, and hastens to the grave.

The chorus have a presentiment of the impending vengeance, gaining new courage from the dream which they have just heard.

"For unforgotten is the guilt, the shameful, terrible deed. Now from the cave of darkness comes forth the Erinyes, to avenge the blood-stained marriage-bed. For since the perilous chariot race of Pelops, and the death of Myrtilus, the charioteer, cast headlong from his golden seat into the sea, there is no deed of fearful violence which this royal house has left undone."

Clytæmnestra comes from the palace, and blames her daughter, for that she never ceases to slander her own mother:

"I do not deny thy father's death. Justice slew him, not I alone, since he with reckless heart dared to sacrifice his daughter."

“Thou didst not justly slay thy husband for thy daughter’s sake, but thou wast led to the deed by vile suggestion of that base coward. And if blood requires blood, then art *thou* doomed to die. And still thou livest with this murderer as his wife, and wickedly dost cast thy daughters forth, and hast sent out thy son Orestes to a life of pain. Can all this be vengeance for thy daughter? It is hardly seemly for a daughter to charge her mother with such evil; yet thy hateful deeds compel me :

“Base deeds by base are learnt and perfected.”

Clytæmnestra bids her be silent, and turning to Apollo’s altar, prays :

“If good my dream portends, grant me fulfilment; if evil, turn it on my enemies; prevent their craft, that would destroy my happiness and power, and grant me prosperous days. All else, which caution bids me hide, I shall deem that thou, being a god, dost know.”

The attendant of Orestes enters, and asks for the king and queen. Saluting Clytæmnestra, he says :

“Hither am I sent by Phanoteus, thine and Ægisthus’ friend, to bring thee pleasant tidings. Orestes is dead! He had come to Delphi, to the festival of the god, there to win fame and glory in the fivefold contest. He had already taken many prizes, when on another day came the chariot race, in which he with many others entered.

So the appointed umpires fixed their place by lot, and the chariots stood in order. The brazen trumpet sounded. All shook the rein and started. The course was filled with rolling chariots; high rose the dust. In fair array they sped onward, until one ran full against another, and their fall brought others down, so that the Crisæan plain was filled with wreck of them. Only one from Athens turned and escaped misfortune, and behind him Orestes, urging on his team with his whip. Now this was first, now that. Then as his horse turned to the left round the pillar of the goal, the chariot of Orestes touched, and the axle-pin broke. Down he fell from off his chariot, and the horses dragged him over the course, hurling him now on the ground, now into the air. Loud were the people's cries. With difficulty stopping the horses' course, they freed the blood-stained corpse, which his very friends could scarce recognise. His body was burnt, and the Phocian messengers here bring his ashes, that they may find a tomb within his fatherland."

The chorus are deeply affected by what they hear, and vent their grief in wailing. Even Clytæmnestra feels the power of motherhood; but only for a moment. Soon she glories in the news; for now has passed that fear of vengeance, which has haunted her day and night. Electra feels a double grief, for her brother's death and for her mother's boastful triumph. When

the queen, followed by the messenger, passes into the palace, she bursts into loud lament :

“Now all my hopes are gone! I am bereft of all; and now, as maid, must ever serve my father’s murderers. But I will never live beneath their roof. At this their gate will I all joyless waste away my life, until one comes to slay me; for all my joy in life is gone!”

Then in verses alternate with the chorus she raises the dirge over the dead.

Here Chrysothemis returns, her face full of joy.

“Orestes has come! When I came to our father’s tomb, I saw new streams of milk poured over it, and our father’s resting-place bedecked with garlands: yet none was near. Going closer to the mound I saw fresh cut locks of hair upon the top of the stone. And at once my heart told me that these signs came from Orestes; for what other would make such offerings to the dead? Take courage, sister! This very day shall bring us happiness.”

Electra tells her sister how much she is deceived :

“Alas! he is dead; the news has come but just now. Yet if thou wilt lend thine aid, our woe is soon ended. Dead is the man who should have taken vengeance for his father’s death. Now it doth fall to us to punish them, and all will praise our filial love; and we two

sisters, happily wed, shall no more grow old in joyless sorrow. The citizens, and strangers too, will praise the sisters twain: 'They saved their father's house, bringing upon its enemies doom of death, regardless of their lives: wherefore love and reverence is their due; at feast and council each should show to them due honour for their manly prowess.' Wherefore, dear sister, follow me; free thyself and myself from this curse; remember this, a shameful life is to the nobly born meet cause for shame."

It is in vain. Chrysothemis regards such a deed with fearful apprehension; it can never prosper, and can but make worse their unhappy lot. Electra resolves, in scorn of her sister's cowardice, to do the deed alone. The sisters part in anger.

The chorus regret that men will not imitate the birds, and reward their parents' care.

"Not long shall want of love escape punishment from Zeus and Themis throned on high. So strive the children of this house; for alone Electra mourns her father, ready herself to die if only she may take vengeance on the accursed pair. Who ever honoured sire as she? No one of noble heart will deign to stain an honoured name in abasement. So thou hast chosen for thyself a lamentable fate, that thou mayest conquer evil, and so gain a double fame as best and wisest daughter. Mayest thou then be

victorious over thy foes, and live in might and wealth even as now in servitude, since thou dost ever abide by the highest laws of Zeus, winning the prize of filial virtue."

Orestes now enters, accompanied by Pylades ; he bears the urn in his hand and asks for Ægisthus :

" I bring him news from Strophius, who sent this urn, which holds Orestes' ashes."

Electra asks for the urn, that with these ashes she may bewail herself and all her race. Seizing the vase that holds all that is left of her brother, she salutes him, whom she sent forth with other hopes, and now holds in her hands—mere nothingness.

" Oh that I had died myself before I sent thee forth to a distant land ! Then hadst thou shared thy father's death and grave. Now thou hast died an exile far from home, no loving sister's hands to lay thee out and bear thee to the pyre ; but thou wast tended by the hands of careless strangers. Thou didst love me in place of all, as mother and as sister ; and now a single day has taken all in death. Our foes exult, my mother laughs with joy, and thou hast brought me low with thee. Oh close me in this urn, that henceforth I may dwell with thee ! The dead are troubled by no cares."

The chorus beg her to moderate her grief, and Orestes can scarce restrain himself from telling her the truth.

When she goes on to tell what she has suffered from her mother, mother only in name, he can contain himself no longer, and cries :

“Put aside that urn ! It does not hold thy brother’s ashes. He lives, and stands before thee ! I am he !”

And in proof he shows her his father’s signet-ring. Electra gives a cry of joy, and embraces the brother who comes to end her sorrows. But Orestes counsels prudence ; she must be silent and hide her rapture, which she expresses with a touching self-abandonment.

The attendant of Orestes comes from the palace, and is presented to Electra as the man to whom she gave the young Orestes in that hour of misfortune. He calls on Orestes and Pylades to set to work. “The hour calls for resolution.” They go in without delay ; Electra follows, praying that Apollo may graciously show to all men how the gods reward impiety.

“Now Ares, breathing slaughter, speeds into the house”, sing the chorus ; “and the Erinyes pass across the threshold, they who track all deeds of crime ; and in the fair ancestral halls the avenger plants his foot, bearing fresh bloodshed in his mighty hand : and Hermes leads them straight to the goal, veiled in night and secrecy.”

Electra comes out again, to watch that Ægisthus may not approach unobserved. From the palace are heard



her mother's cries of agony. The chorus shudder. Again the cry is heard! "Ah me, woe, woe! Ægisthus, where art thou? My son, my son, have pity on thy mother!" "Little pity hadst thou on him or on his father," cries Electra. And pierced by the steel Clytæmnestra groans in her death agony.

"The curse is now fulfilled," say the chorus; "for those who died long since now drain the blood of those that slew them."

Orestes, dripping with blood, comes out with Pylades. The unhappy woman is dead, and now Ægisthus is seen approaching. He asks for the Phocian who brought the tidings of Orestes' death. Electra bids him go within the house, when he shall hear and see that which shall rejoice him. Yet he commands the body to be brought and shown to the citizens, that they may no longer cherish empty hopes, but render due obedience to himself.

Orestes and his companion bring the body of Clytæmnestra, covered with a sheet, and Ægisthus rejoices at the sight. "Withdraw the veil from the face, that I may mourn his death."

Orestes bids him uplift the veil himself.

"Æg. Thou giv'st good counsel, and I list to thee:  
And thou, if yet she tarries in the house,  
Call Clytæmnestra.

Or. (*as Ægisthus lifts the veil*). Here she lies before thee!  
Seek her not elsewhere."

Ægisthus sees that it is the queen :

“Into whose snares, whose closely tangled mesh,  
Have I, poor victim ! fallen?”

Electra bids her brother lose no time. He leads Ægisthus to the place where once he slew Agamemnon there to die himself.

“Thou must not die the death thou wouldst desire ;  
I needs must make it bitter. Doom like this  
Should fall on all who dare transgress the laws,  
The doom of death. Then wickedness no more  
Would multiply its strength.”

The chorus close the play with the words :

“O seed of Atreus, after many woes,  
Thou hast come forth, thy freedom hardly won,  
By this emprise made perfect.”

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In his lectures on dramatic art and literature, A. W. Schlegel has made an acute and brilliant comparison between the *Mourning Women* of Æschylus and the *Electra* of Sophocles. He shows that Æschylus dealt with the most sombre and terrible side of the story, especially in its relation to those dark divinities which were so large a feature in his theology. Sophocles, on the other hand, while elaborating the details, represents the whole story in a milder and less terrible form, by concentrating our sympathies on Electra, on her constancy in adhering to her own deep convictions, and on the heroism she displays in suffering.

“What specially characterizes the tragedy of Sophocles is the divine innocence existing amid such terrible surroundings, the fresh bloom of life and youth which pervades the whole. Apollo, the bright sun-god, at whose bidding the deed was done, seems to shed his brightness throughout; even the day-break with which the play opens is full of meaning. The world of graves and shadows is kept aloof; what in Æschylus is inspired by the soul of the murdered man comes here from the heart of the living Electra, who lends herself to love and hate with equal strength.

“Sophocles gives Orestes a more consistent individuality than does Æschylus; neither before nor after the deed does he show any hesitation or qualms of conscience. He is altogether harder and sterner, as witness the terrible dramatic trick played upon Ægisthus with Clytæmnestra's body, and the shameful death to which he leads him at the close. Clytæmnestra's dream offers perhaps the best means of comparing the poets' treatment. It is in both alike appropriate, significant, and suggestive; that of Æschylus is more awe-inspiring and more terrible, that of Sophocles the more majestic in its horror.”

Certainly the ease with which the terrible matricide is accomplished, and the complete absence of any scruples in daughter and son, is revolting to modern feeling, and marks the weak spot in the play. Of course we must not forget that it is just this which

makes Orestes and Electra tragic personages. The evils of life may be so great as to overpower the voice of love and conscience even in noble souls, and to direct the power of virtue into wrong paths ; and this is the essence of tragedy.

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“ŒDIPUS THE KING.”

It is characteristic of the two great tragedians that Æschylus took the terrible history of the house of Atreus, and Sophocles the errors of the family of Laius, as the subjects of their most powerful and finished plays. The house of Atreus is vexed with impious family strife until the Furies are appeased by the special intervention of a god ; the house of Laius shows us the relentless visiting of a father's sin upon his innocent children. In the one case our awe amounts to horror ; in the other, we feel the deepest pity for Œdipus in his inevitable sufferings : there divine justice, personified in the Furies, seems to be rather silenced than satisfied ; here the Furies are themselves the atoning power, which by the death of the sufferer in their grove at Colonus gives release from suffering to the unconscious sinner, and appoints him as the kindly Genius who is destined to confer everlasting sanctity on the land in which is his grave.

In respect of artistic composition *Œdipus the King*

is certainly the most perfect tragedy of antiquity. The gradual unveiling of the terrible secret keeps the mind of the spectator perpetually on the rack of antagonistic emotions, hopes, and fears. As the suspicion becomes certainty, that the king who sought to avenge his predecessor's death is the murderer himself, feelings of pity for the unhappy prince rise in our hearts ; but our pity rises to admiration when we find that, in the ruin of the ghastly fate which robs him of his all, he still preserves his noble heart, and does not in his own misery forget his country and his children. The play was an especial favourite with the ancients. Aristotle refers to it several times in his *Poetics* in terms of admiration, and the *Hypothesis*<sup>27</sup> says : "The name of 'Œdipus the King,' generally bestowed upon it, is expressive, for it stands at the head of the whole of the poet's works, even though, as Dicæarchus says, it was beaten in the competition by Philocles." How the Athenian jury can have made such an award it is impossible to conjecture ;<sup>28</sup> but we must not overlook the fact, that the prize was awarded, not to a single play, but to a series of four, whether these were arranged as a tetralogy on the same subject or not. Hence it is always possible that the plays represented with *Œdipus the King* did not reach the same high level. What these pieces were we have no means of knowing, nor indeed do we know what was the tetralogy of Philocles that gained the prize. No great probability

can be attached to the opinion, which has been recently hazarded, that the failure of the play was due to the impossibility of Œdipus ruling for twenty years without troubling himself about the circumstances attendant on the death of Laius (l. 112), or to the improbable assumption that the suspicions of Jocasta were not aroused by the marks on his feet and the name he bore. These facts indeed were already an integral part of the legend, which represents Œdipus as learning the truth only when the children of his marriage with Jocasta were grown up. As a matter of truth, poets, as many extant plays prove, and certainly the audience as well, attached little importance to such breaches of verisimilitude. Referring to the *Œdipus*, Schlegel very justly remarks that the play is a proof of the different view which ancient and modern writers take as to the limits of dramatic probability. "The ancients were not writing for an audience of prosaic and calculating critics, and an error which was only detected on an analysis of the play, and was not patent when it was being represented, with them went for nothing."

The scene of the play is laid in front of the royal palace at Thebes. Œdipus enters, and finds citizens and priests, older and younger, sitting as suppliants round the altar, with branches of olive in their hands. An aged priest, in answer to his questions, says :

"Our city lies overwhelmed by tossing waves, smitten

in the ripening fruits of earth, smitten in its herds and in the untimely births of women; and the heaven-sent pestilence, which fills dark Hades' halls, makes desolate the homes of Cadmus' town. Therefore seek we thee, as one who once did come, with the gods' help, to free our city from the tribute paid of old to the grim Sphinx; so now find for us some succour, whether the counsel be of god or man. Then will we hail thee as a second time deliverer of this land."

Œdipus answers :

"Not unknown to me is your wish; well I know your sufferings; yet is there none that suffers more than I. For I mourn both for the State and for myself, and already have I sought many means of deliverance. But just now have I sent Creon, my brother-in-law, Menœceus' son, to Apollo in Delphi, that he may seek deliverance from these ills, and even ere this should he be here."

Creon enters with joyful face, and tells them :

"Phœbus bids us chase from out the State the blood-stained hand that once slew king Laïus. For Laïus once went forth to inquire of the god, and never thence came back; and of those with him only one escaped by flight, and he told that a band of robbers fell upon them. But then, as the Sphinx at that time held the State in thrall, no one took heed to follow up the murderers."

Œdipus promises to do his utmost to free the and from the gods' wrath.

“For he that slew him, whosoe'er he be,  
Will wish perchance with such a blow to smite  
Me also. Helping him, I help myself.”

And the priest calls on the band of citizens to take comfort, and to rise up and pray to Phœbus that he may save them and deliver them from their woe.

The chorus of Theban elders strike up a pæan to the god of Delos, the Averter :

“Athena, deathless child of Zeus, and Artemis, who watchest over our land, and Phœbus the far-darter, ye who did erstwhile quench the flames of misery, now come and look upon our countless ills. The earth's fruits fail, vain is the travail of women, and one by one do the folk flit to the shore of the god below. And wives and aged mothers mourn, round the altar steps asking help for piteous ill, and mingled with their wailing cries of woe rises the solemn pæan. Most gracious child of Zeus, drive back this raging god of pestilence ; and thou, great father Zeus, smite him with thy fiery thunderbolt ! Apollo, send thy rescuing darts ; and thou, Artemis, thy torch of fire ; and, last, let Bacchus come, to whom this land has given his name, with blazing torch against the god who among the gods lacks honour.”

Œdipus instructs the citizens :



"Let whoso hath any knowledge of the murder of the king tell it to me. And even if he should charge himself as guilty of the deed, let him not fear; he shall depart uninjured from the land. And should a stranger be able to point out the man, then he shall have rich recompense from me and the city's thanks. But whoso knows this thing and holds his peace, let him be forsaken both of gods and men. And may a like curse fall on him who did the guilty deed, whether he lurks alone in hiding or with confederates. May he waste away in bitterest want.

"And for me  
If in my house, I knowing it, he dwells,  
May every curse I spake on my head fall.  
And you the rest, the men from Cadmus sprung,  
To whom these words approve themselves as good,  
May righteousness befriend you, and the gods,  
In full accord, dwell with you evermore."

The chorus protest their innocence :

"Apollo knows who did the thing, and if the god keeps silence, then Tiresias comes next the god in deep insight; to him thou mayest send, and learn the truth."

Œdipus informs them that he has already sent two messengers to him. And now is seen approaching, guided by a boy, Tiresias, the inspired seer, who, though blind, yet sees all things. Œdipus bids him reveal the murderer, that he may free both the city

and himself from the curse of blood. Then the seer makes answer :

“Ah me ! ah me ! how dread is wisdom’s gift,  
When no good issue waiteth on the wise !  
I knew it, ah ! too well, and then forgot,  
Or else I had not on this journey come.

Let me go home ! for thus thy lot shalt thou,  
And I mine own, bear easiest, if thou yield.”

In vain the king begs him to speak. At last he threatens him in anger :

“I think that thou  
Didst plot the deed, and do it, though the blow  
Thy hands, it may be, dealt not. Hadst thou seen,  
I would have said it was thy deed alone.

*Tir.* And has it come to this ? I charge thee, hold  
To thy late edict, and from this day forth  
Speak not to me, nor yet to these ; for thou,  
THOU art the accursèd plague-spot of the land.  
I say thou art the murderer whom thou seek’st.  
I say that thou, in vilest intercourse  
With those that dearest are, dost blindly live,  
Nor seest the depth of evil thou hast reached.

*Æd.* O wealth, and sovereignty, and noblest skill  
Surpassing skill in life so envy-fraught,  
How great the ill-will dogging all your steps !  
If for the sake of kingship, which the State  
Hath given unasked for, freely in mine hands,  
Creon the faithful, found my friend throughout,  
Now seeks with masked attack to drive me forth,  
And hires this wizard, plotter of foul schemes,  
A vagrant mountebank, whose sight is clear  
For pay alone, but in his art stone-blind !

*Tir.* King though thou be, I claim an equal right  
 To make reply. That power, at least, is mine :  
 For I am not thy slave, but Loxias'.  
 And this I say, since thou my blindness mock'st,  
 That thou, though seeing, failest to perceive  
 Thy evil plight, nor where thou liv'st, nor yet  
 With whom thou dwellest. Know'st thou even this,  
 Whence thou art sprung? All ignorant thou sinn'st  
 Against thine own, beneath and on the earth :  
 And soon a two-edged curse from sire and mother,  
 With foot of fear, shall chase thee forth from us,  
 Now seeing all things clear, then all things dark.

This man whom thou dost seek with hue and cry,  
 As murderer of Laius, he is here,  
 In show an alien sojourner, but in truth  
 A home-born Theban. No delight to him  
 Will that discovery bring. Blind, having seen,  
 Poor, having rolled in wealth,—he, with a staff  
 Feeling his way, to a strange land shall go!  
 And to his sons shall he be seen at once  
 Father and brother, and of her who bore him  
 Husband and son, sharing his father's bed,  
 His father's murderer. Go thou then within,  
 And brood o'er this ; and, if thou find'st me fail,  
 Say that my skill in prophecy is gone."

He goes, and Œdipus rushes furiously out. The chorus pray for quick discovery of the guilty one.

"The seer's words have filled our hearts with thoughts of terror. Yet thus far has Œdipus shown himself a wise and prudent man, wherefore we citizens accuse him of no guilt."

Creon comes from the palace, crying that Œdipus accuses him of treachery ; better death than such a charge. The chorus try to calm him :

“In anger, not with calm judgment, made he this reproach, roused to madness by words of the seer:”

The king enters, and charges him with traitorous conduct.

“So thou would'st slay me, and rob me of my throne ! At thy suggestion did I seek the seer, who, were his sayings true, would long ere this have laid the murder to my charge.”

Creon answers him quietly :

“No wish have I for the throne ; power indeed I share with thee and my sister Jocasta ; and were I king, I should gain naught but care. Now all men salute me, court my favour, should they seek aught of the king. Fool indeed were I to change my fortune ! Go thyself, and ask at Delphi whether I brought back the oracle I heard. And if it proves that I did plot with the seer, then let me die, condemned by my own voice as well as thine. Assume not my guilt on shadowy proof, nor thrust out a true friend, whose honour the future will prove. A single day detects the vileness of the vile.”

“I dare not wait,” says Œdipus to the chorus, who counsel delay, “or else he wins the day. He must pay for his treason with his life.”

Jocasta appears to still the strife and separate the disputants. With an oath Creon asserts his innocence, and Jocasta and the chorus beg Œdipus to give him credence, and not to condemn a friend on mere suspicion. Finally their words induce the king to consent, and Creon leaves, misjudged by the king, but held as innocent by the others. The queen asks how the strife arose, and when she hears that the seer has accused her husband of having wrought the murder of Laius, she bids him pay small heed to words of prophets :

“For to Laius once an oracle was brought that he should die at our son’s hands, his and mine. And yet it was a robber-band that killed him where the three roads meet, while our son saw not the light three days, for a slave in a mountain wilderness cast him forth, his ankles fast bound together.”

Œdipus is deeply affected at the mention of the three roads. He asks where lies this meeting of the roads, and when the deed was done. He hears that the murder was committed in Phocis, at the spot where meet the roads from Delphi and from Daulia, and the time, just ere he came to Thebes himself. His heart sinks within him. To his further questions Jocasta describes what Laius was like : in stature tall, his hair just touched with gray, his features not unlike Œdipus’ own. Then he knows that his terrible curse has fallen upon himself, and it would seem that

the blind seer had seen indeed. He asks about the king's suite, and is told that they were five in all, and of those one a herald; the king drove in a chariot.

All is now too clear! He will himself question the only companion of Laius who escaped, and afterwards begged that they would send him far from the town. Now shall Jocasta know how the deed befell.

“A child of Polybus, a prince of Corinth, and of Merope, I lived there, by the citizens held in chief honour, until one day a misadventure broke in upon my happiness. At a banquet a man, who had drunk deeply, taunted me as not my father's son. And when I asked my parents, they heaped reproach on him who told me of my shame, but yet denied it not. And so, unknown to them, I came to Delphi, where the god gave me no answer, but sent me on my way with prophecies of shameful import.

And other things he spake, dread, dire, and dark,  
That I should join in wedlock with my mother,  
Beget a brood that men should loathe to look at,  
Be murderer of the father that begot me.

“Wherefore I fled far from my fatherland, that I might escape this fate. And so I came to those cross-roads, and there a herald met me, with a man seated in a chariot, like him thou told'st me of. Rudely the charioteer drove me from the road. Full of wrath, I struck him. Then with a quick blow the old man

smote my head. Wherefore I slew him with my staff, and all his escort. If this was Laius, then on me falls the curse I spake myself. No longer dare I stay here to defile the dead man's marriage-bed; and no more I dare, if I must flee, to tread my country's soil, in fear lest I slay my father and wed my mother. Far, rather, would I fly from all men's eyes, before this pollution comes on me. But still I hope that there may be no ground for these my fears. For if the countryman spake sooth, it was a band of robbers that slew Laius. Bid them call him quickly here."

Jocasta seeks to comfort him.

"It was Apollo's oracle that the king should die at the hands of his own son, who perished long before him. All oracles are false!"

They both pass into the palace. The chorus are troubled by the queen's last words, and pray that it may be theirs to keep wise modesty in all their words and deeds, and never to overpass the eternal ordinances of the gods. For often vaunting pride falls at last into an abyss of destruction. Therefore may an evil fate attend whoso gives himself to impious word or deed, who has no awe of divine righteousness, no reverence for the gods' holy statutes. Such deeds are meet for execration. May true fulfilment follow the oracle once given to Laius, else all is over with Apollo's fame, and gone the glory of the gods.

Meanwhile Jocasta's mind has been moved to offer prayer for Œdipus, who is a prey to anxiety and inaccessible to her persuasion.

"May Apollo bring deliverance from this grief! For we all tremble when we see him without confidence who should steer the ship."

A messenger enters and asks for Œdipus. Having greeted Jocasta, he tells her, "The citizens of Corinth would make him king, for Polybus is dead." Jocasta bids them quickly call her husband. "Great oracles of gods, where are ye? Œdipus lives in exile, lest his hand should slay his father, who yet has died by hand of fate." Œdipus enters, and receives the news with joy. Worthless then were those oracles which said that he should slay his father. "Now the earth covers him, and he fell untouched by sword of mine. Perchance he died for love of me, and so I caused his death." But still, while his mother lives, he fears that "bed of incest"; and so he does not dare to go back to Corinth. Hearing this, and learning from Œdipus the exact words of the oracle concerning him, the messenger seeks to relieve his mind in regard to his mother.

"Thou art no son to Polybus. For I myself gave thee, as a gift, a child to childless parents, who reared and loved thee as their son. I was once a shepherd of the mountain flocks in Cithæron's glen.



Another herdsman, a servant of Laius, found there a child, and gave him to me. His feet had been pinned together, and therefore I called him *Œdipus* (*Swollen-foot*).

Œdipus asks the elders whether any of them knew that herdsman, and they tell him that he is the very man for whom he has sent already. Jocasta, seeing the truth, begs Œdipus to leave further questioning; and as the king persists rushes out, crying,

“Woe! woe, ill-fated one! My last word this,  
This only, and no more for evermore.”

And in this horror she passes away, amid the wondering of the chorus. Œdipus imagines that she fears he will prove to be of lowly origin, and that so she feels wounded in her pride.

“But whatsoe’er I be,  
Such as I am I am, and needs must on  
To fathom all the secret of my birth.”

The chorus express their joy that they will soon be able to greet him as a child of Thebes.

“Clearly art thou son of a god: of Pan, who roams the glens, or of Apollo, who loves the wild heights of the wooded hills, or of Hermes, or Bacchus, whose dwelling is upon the mountain peaks, who received thee, a gift of one of the Heliconian nymphs, with whom he sports in love.”

Œdipus sees the herdsman approaching, attended by servants; the messenger recognises him at the same time. He says in answer to the king's questions:

"I was born a slave in Laïus' house. On the mountain of Cithæron, and in the regions round, I watched his flocks for nearly all my life. And once I gave"—he hesitates—"this man a child to rear,—no, not mine own, but one which another left with me. Let that suffice, O king; ask me no more!"

Œdipus presses him impatiently, and compels him to speak the awful words.

"Laïus' own son it was. Its mother gave it me to make away with, for an oracle had said that some day he should slay his sire. And I in pity gave it to this man to carry to another land. But the life I gave was a curse."

"*Œd.* Woe! woe! woe! woe! All cometh clear at last.  
O light, may this my last glance be on thee,  
Who now am seen owing my birth to those  
To whom I ought not, and with whom I ought not  
In wedlock living, whom I ought not slaying."

With these words Œdipus rushes into the palace in despair.

The chorus bewail the race of man as a thing of naught.

"Vanity uplifteth a man, vanity casteth him down;  
Œdipus' fate teaches us to hold no man blest. For

he reached the summit of highest happiness when he triumphed over the Sphinx, and as king in Thebes was honoured with highest glory. And now he lives in misery, hurled down by changing Fate; therefore our lips are filled with woe immeasurable."

A messenger enters and tells the horrors that have befallen in the palace.

"By madness mastered, Jocasta hastened through the palace halls; tearing her hair, she locked herself within the marriage chamber, and called on Laius and the marriage-bed, where she had borne 'spouse to her spouse and children to her child.' Presently Œdipus rushed in with cries of woe, and cried desperately for a sword, and called his wife. And coming to the double doors, and tearing them down, he broke through, and saw his wife there hanging upon a twisted noose. With a fearful cry, he loosed the rope that held her; and as she lay upon the ground, he tore the gold-chased clasps from her robe and struck the pupils of his eyes, 'that they might never see again what ills he suffered, and what ills he did.' The dark blood gushed out and stains his cheeks. And thus he will show himself to Thebes, before he goes forth self-banished."

Œdipus is led out, and the old men shudder at the fearful sight; for "greater grief than this had never man in life." Œdipus laments his fate, accusing Phœbus

that he had brought this dreadful thing on him, and cursing the man who saved his life in the mountain forest, that he might be his father's murderer, that he might take his mother for wife.

"I must needs blind myself, that I might not see my father when I pass to Hades, nor my suffering mother, nor my children's face, nor yet this city, nor the shrines of the gods. How could I meet my citizens face to face, stained with such dire pollution? Oh! could I only stop the stream of sound, and close my ears against it! How sweet a thing it were to be bereft of thought, free from all ill! Why, O Cithæron, didst thou shelter me? Why, Corinth, didst thou nurse my wretched life? Else had I not at those cross-roads been sprinkled with mine own blood, else had I not come here to do this impious deed!

"With utmost speed, by all the gods, or slay me,  
Or drive me forth, or hide me in the sea,  
Where never more your eyes may look on me."

Creon approaches, with deep pity for the king's misfortunes. Œdipus begs him to cast him forth, far from all men's tongues and intercourse. But Creon must first learn the god's will.

"I pray thee," begs the king, "give burial to my wife, just as thou wilt; but let me dwell on Cithæron's heights, where once my parents doomed me to die. My sons, for they are men, will care for themselves;

but my daughters do thou, Creon, take in thy charge. Let me touch them once again. Bring me my precious children."

His wish is granted.

"I thank thee, Creon, for this grace, and for its sake may the gods guard thy life better than they guarded mine!"

He calls the children to him, and laments that, begotten in iniquity, they must forego all the honours and the joys of marriage.

"For who would make this shame his own? Old age awaits you, unmarried, childless. Give me thy hand, Creon, that thou wilt pity them, and wilt not desert them; for they, poor orphans, have none but thee to look to. And while I live, wherever it be ordained, may yours, my children, be a better fate than was your father's."

Creon asks him to enter the palace, and he follows, though loth to leave his children. The chorus turn to the citizens of Thebes :

"Behold this Œdipus,  
Who knew the famous riddle, and was noblest,  
Whose fortune who saw not with envious glances?  
And, lo! in what a sea of direst trouble  
He now is plunged. From hence the lesson learn ye,  
To reckon no man happy till ye witness  
The closing day; until he pass the border  
Which severs life from death, unscathed by sorrow."

*Œdipus the King* is a warning to us not to approach the consideration of ancient tragedy with the prejudices of our modern æsthetic ideas. We look in vain for the principle of poetic justice; according to modern feeling the sufferings of the hero should be the result of his own action, the guilt he expiates should be his own. In the life of Œdipus we can find no real guilt. He seems rather to expiate the sins of his father and his thoughtless mother, not his own. It was a prevalent, and almost universal view, in old times, that the sins of the fathers were visited upon the children, and this feeling has found concrete expression in the legend of Œdipus. Aristotle teaches us the necessity of some moral shortcoming in the hero of tragedy. He lays it down (*Poet.*, cap. xiii.) that the change of fortune which forms the basis of tragedy should fall neither on the virtuous nor on the simply vicious, but rather on those natures which lie between the two extremes, and represent the ordinary standard of humanity. Such natures should not be pre-eminent for virtue and high moral feeling, nor, on the other hand, should they fall into misfortune in consequence of their own vicious or base tendencies, but rather as the result of some error (*δι' ἀμαρτίαν τινά*). Hence we see the heroes of tragedy taken from people of such position and respect as Œdipus, Thyestes, and the like. But it is clear that the term *ἀμαρτία* includes not only the sin of the individual, but also the mistaken act which results

from intellectual blindness, and Aristotle expressly instances the case of Œdipus. Therefore we may conclude that in his opinion the fate of the hero may be due to some "error" in which he is involved through no fault of his own.

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"ŒDIPUS AT COLONUS."

"The young Sophocles in his home at Colonus must have been familiar from his early youth with the suggestive and striking legends of the death of Œdipus; and these he uses as the subject of his tragedy, the *Œdipus at Colonus*. There is trustworthy evidence that he wrote this play towards the end of his life, and it was produced for the first time by his grandson, the younger Sophocles, in B.C. 402-1. The tragedy shows the triumph of pain and suffering over human strength and presumption; it glorifies and transforms what is ordinarily accounted sad and pitiful; it presents to us a mystic transfiguration of death, in which there are many signs, for all who can read the language of the heart, that the story which the poet tells is to him no mere effort of the imagination, but one which embodies the feelings of an old age in which he had suffered much at the hands of those who were nearest to him, and when he was looking forward to death to grant him the rest for which he yearned. It is true that the dramatic construction of this tragedy differs from others in the fact that the

*dénoûment* comes not at the end of the play, but rather pervades the whole, as in the final tragedy of the Æschylean trilogy ; yet the truly dramatic presentment of ethical and religious ideas makes the *Œdipus at Colonus* a tragedy in the best and highest meaning of the term." (Ottfried Müller.)

The aged Œdipus, blind and an exile from his native land, enters, led by his daughter Antigone. After long and toilsome wanderings he has reached the sacred groves of the Eumenides at Colonus, where grow the olive, vine, and laurel, and the sweet song of nightingales fills the air. He seats himself wearily upon a stone. An inhabitant of the country approaches, and bids the old man leave his seat and the holy ground, where none may tread, for it belongs to the dread goddesses, daughters of Earth and Darkness, here called the *Eumenides* (*i.e.* the kindly, gracious ones), though elsewhere they bear another name (*Furies*).

The old man will not move ; may they, he prays, graciously receive an exiled suppliant. He hears, in answer to his questions, that the ground all round is holy. For there dwells the god Poseidon, and Prometheus too, the bringer of fire ; it is called the brazen threshold, and is Athens' rampart ; the people there claim as their patron the hero Colonus Hippius (*of the horse*) ; and the lord of that land is Theseus, Ægeus' son.

Œdipus begs the countryman to summon Theseus ; much shall he gain for this slight boon.



But he says that he must first tell his townsmen, and they shall judge whether Œdipus must go or stay.

Œdipus reveals his purpose to his daughter :

“When Phœbus first proclaimed my woes, he promised me that they should cease, after many years, here in this land, at the sanctuary of these dread Sisters. Here should I reach the goal of life, bringing gain to those who lend us aid. Hither have the gods guided me, that at last the Daughters of primordial Night should grant me end and issue of my life, unless indeed I am unworthy of this boon.”

The chorus, old men of Colonus, enter, and the fugitives hide in the depths of the grove. The chorus seek the old man who, unabashed, has dared approach the untrodden grove, which all pass by in silence and with downcast eyes. Œdipus comes forward,—a terrible apparition to the seekers. They call him forth from the holy place ; if he wishes to address them, he must first quit the sacred grove. He lets Antigone lead him out, and the chorus inquire his name and country. The old man answers with reluctance, “I am Œdipus, he whom Læus begot.” The chorus, seized with horror, call on him to quit their confines immediately, lest he bring a curse upon the land.

“If ye cannot endure,” Antigone supplicates, “to hear my aged father, at least have pity, I implore, on me, so

desolate. By all that is most dear to you, I pray that ye pity our distress."

They are moved to pity, yet fear the gods.

"Idle then," says Œdipus, "is that fair fame of Athens, as ready to lend aid to suffering strangers, if ye drive me forth, fearing but my name, not my presence or my deeds. And indeed in the past have I rather suffered than done aught. Honouring the gods, show them no dishonour by injustice towards a suppliant, nor yet destroy the fortunes of the state, brought by my hands. To your lord will I tell all. Till he come, keep yourselves from sin."

A messenger is sent to fetch the king.

Antigone remarks a woman approaching, mounted on a colt. It is Ismene, her sister, accompanied by a servant. Ismene greets them both, and, embracing them, tells them what has befallen the sons of Œdipus :

"At first they were content to leave the throne to Creon, mindful of the curse upon the race. Yet soon arose a struggle for chief power, and the younger robbed the elder, Polynices, taking the throne from him, and thrusting him from the land. He fled to Argos, and there collected new friends and allies to lead in war against Thebes. Their only hope of rescue, as a recent oracle declares, is to bring back Œdipus alive or dead. Therefore soon will Creon come himself to take thee, father mine, unto the confines of Theban ground.

For things will not go well with them, if thy grave is far from the land. Yet thou mayest not rest in native soil; thy father's blood forbids. Thy own sons prefer their power to love of thee."

"Then may the gods," cries Œdipus, "never lay to rest their strife! May throne and sceptre neither stay with him who has them now, nor come to him, the exile! How shamefully have they entreated me, their father! For at the first in the greatness of my grief I wished for banishment or much more welcome death; yet no man then would do me this kind service. But when my sorrow lessened, and I found that in my passion I had done myself punishment beyond my deserts, then I was driven forth, and my sons refused me help, and would not speak a word to save me. So I went forth a beggar among strangers, my only guide and aid a tender maiden; my sons chose rather throne and sway than him who begot them. Never shall they see me their ally; in vain shall Creon follow up my steps. If but the Athenian people and these dread goddesses of the land lend me their aid, I shall bring blessing on their state and trouble on my foes."

The chorus are moved with pity, and advise him to make atonement to the dwelling of the gods, whither he has come, with threefold offerings, and there to lay thrice nine olive-twigs, that the Gracious Ones may graciously receive him and in pity save him. Ismene:

hastens to procure what is required ; meantime the chorus ask to hear his story. Reluctantly he tells his shame, the horrors of the marriage-bed, and his father's murder, deeds to which he was betrayed unconsciously and in ignorance.

Theseus then enters, and quickly recognises the son of Laïus by the mutilation of his eyes. He gently asks with what intent he has come hither, and promises his help. "For I myself as stranger wandered much, and know too well how full of changes is the life of man."

Œdipus thanks him :

"I bring thee my poor feeble frame, a thing of little worth to look upon, which yet shall bring thee strength of mighty blessing. For this reason my people, who felt no shame to cast me forth, will come to take me back, since an oracle has said that some day this city shall lay them low."

"No man," Theseus promises him, "shall take thee hence. I now must leave thee, yet my name shall keep thee safe from all mishap."

The chorus sing praises of the beautiful wood of Colonus, and of the land where Pallas first planted the olive and Poseidon tamed horses with the bit.\*

Meanwhile Antigone sees Creon approaching, attended

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\* See p. 108 for this ode.

by a bodyguard. Œdipus trembles, but the chorus bid him take heart. "Though we are weak with age, our country's might has not yet grown old."

Creon enters, and says :

"I am not come as enemy to this state, strong and powerful as none other is in Hellas. I am sent by counsel of my citizens to persuade yon old man to return with me, since it is mine most of all, his nearest kinsman, to lament his sufferings. I mourn to see thee, Œdipus, in thy misery, a wretched wanderer, with but one attendant; and to find this tender maiden begging for her father, free for any passing stranger to insult. So do thou, Œdipus, follow me back home, leaving this state, where thou hast had such fair reception. More honour may thine own, that reared thee, claim."

To which Œdipus answers :

"Thy speech deceives me not ; for thy words are but a veil for crafty schemes. Thou art come to take me back to pain of never-ending slavery ; thou wilt not lead me home, but keep me on the confines of the land, that so thy state may escape such chastisement of the avenging powers as Phœbus and Zeus have foretold. Wherefore, Creon, get thee home, and leave me here in peace."

Creon threatens to use force. "Ismene has already gone ; Antigone shall follow." And all the efforts of

the chorus are useless. Creon's guards seize the maiden and carry her off. Œdipus has lost his support and guide, and is now at Creon's mercy. Creon seizes the old man, who turns and curses him for robbing him of his last light.

“For this may yon bright Sun-god, scanning all,  
Grant thee thyself, and all thy race with thee,  
To wear thy life in dreary age like mine !”

Creon is leading him off by force. The chorus call upon the people and their leader to come quickly and lend their aid.

Theseus, arriving from the sacrifice he has been offering to the Sea-god, is told of the indignity suffered by one who had the promise of his protection. He calls on all, foot or horse, to hasten with all speed from the sacrifice. Let them follow up the maidens, arrest the robbers in their flight, and save himself from becoming Creon's laughing-stock. By his use of force Creon has broken the most sacred laws of a land where he had no right of entry, save such as hospitality gave him ; he shall not leave the place till the maidens are brought thither.

“I could not know,” says Creon in excuse, “that this people would support Œdipus ; never could I think that they would shield one so befouled, a parricide, whose marriage was an incest. Well I knew that in this state held sway the council of the Hill of Ares,

which suffers not such fugitives to dwell within their city. Therefore I made this capture, and thought I might render ill for ill to one who covered me with curses. Let Theseus do his will; though I am old, I shall try to give him blow for blow."

Œdipus answers :

"O shameless soul, thy scorn shall fall on thee, not me. I am innocent of all thy accusations. Unconsciously and against my will I did but what the oracle foretold and willed long since against my race. I cannot think that my father's soul, if he came back to life from that realm of shadows, would plead against me. The blow I dealt was given in ignorance and in self-defence. It pleases thee to speak with flattering words of Athens and her lord, and yet thou dost forget that this, above all other lands, has reverence for the gods. Hither I came in quest of refuge; and now thou dost dare to take me away, and hast already stolen my children. Wherefore I pray the goddesses of this land to lend me their protecting aid, that thou mayest learn the justice of the guardians of this state."

Theseus orders Creon to accompany him without delay, and to show him whither the maidens have been carried. "For one man shall not boast that he has shamed this city." Creon yields, with threats, and Theseus bids Œdipus remain in peace, with firm trust

that Theseus will never rest until the children are restored.

The chorus wish that they might witness the battle-turmoil, amid the troop of warriors, at the brazen call of Ares, when Theseus hastens to pursue the maiden sisters, prize of the mighty fray :

“ Terrible our townsmen’s courage, terrible the might of Theseus’ host. Already thoughts of victory fill my heart, and I look for end of sorrow for those who suffered sore at kindred hands. To-day will Zeus accomplish. Oh would that I, a dove on pinions swift, light hovering on some cloud that floats in æther, thence might cast my eyes upon this battle! Guard them, O Zeus, thou who controllest all and seest all; and thou, Pallas Athena, grant the dwellers in thy city mighty conquest in their struggle. May Apollo with his huntress sister come, and bring twofold help to this city and its inhabitants ! ”

The victors are now seen approaching with the maidens ; father and daughters joyously exchange greetings, and Œdipus calls down blessings on their rescuer. Theseus is silent as to how the fight was won, that he may make no idle boasting. The daughters’ lips shall declare all. Yet he must tell the news that met him as he came. A stranger, he was told, kinsman of Œdipus, yet no dweller in his native Thebes, had fled to Poseidon’s altar, seeking a favour from the aged



Œdipus,—an interview, after which he would return to Argos. From this Œdipus discovers who this suppliant is. "It is my hateful son, to whose words I never will listen." Theseus warns him to honour the gods, and not to turn away a suppliant; and Antigone begs him to suffer her brother's presence.

"What harm to list to words? By words indeed evil deeds disclose themselves.

He is thy child ;  
And therefore, O my father, 'tis not right,  
Although his deeds to thee be basest, vilest,  
To render ill for ill. But let him come :  
Others ere now have thankless offspring reared,  
And bitter wrath have felt ; but they, with spells  
Of friends' good counsel, charmed their souls to peace.  
Look not upon the present, but the past,  
Thy father's and thy mother's woes, and thou,  
I know full well, wilt see that evil mood  
An evil issue finds for evermore ;  
For strong the proofs thou hast within thyself  
In those poor sightless eyeballs. Nay, but yield—  
Yield thou to us. It is not good to meet  
With stiff denials those who ask for right ;  
Nor, having met with good at others' hands,  
To fail in rendering good for good received."

Œdipus overcomes his reluctance and yields. Yet he asks, if the suppliant comes, that his own life may not be left at a stranger's mercy. Theseus promises to protect him as long as any god protects himself, and goes to fetch Polynices.

The chorus censure the vanity of him who seeks great length of days :

“For cares attend ever the long-drawn life, and there is no joy when man has reached the goal of his desire. At last comes death to all, and before death comes friendless age, that knows no love, nor lyre’s sweet tones, nor choral dance.

Happiest beyond compare  
Never to taste of life ;  
Happiest in order next,  
Being born, with quickest speed  
Thither again to turn  
From whence we came.  
When youth has passed away,  
With all its follies light,  
What sorrow is not there ?

What trouble then is absent from our lot ?  
Murders, strifes, wars, and wrath, and jealousy,  
And, closing life’s long course, the last and worst,  
An age of weak caprice,  
Friendless and hard of speech,  
Where, met in union strange,  
Dwell ills on ills.

“Even so from every side woes beat against this woe-worn man, like ceaseless waves beating on a wind-lashed shore.”

Antigone announces that Polynices has come. He, “not knowing whether to bewail his own or his father’s sorrows,” begs him to forgive the wrongs he may have done, and to spare him his reproaches.

"Speak to me one word, my father; send me not away dishonoured; strive with me, my sisters, to turn his wrath, that he send me not away in shame without one word."

Antigone bids him tell what brought him there.

"By right of age I claimed my father's throne. But Eteocles, my younger brother, winning the citizens, drove me from the land. Chief cause of this was the avenging Fury. I went to Argos; there took to wife Adrastus' daughter, and gathered to my cause the armament of the seven foremost chiefs of Peloponnesus; and I swore, either to die in noble fight at Thebes, or to drive him from the state. Hither am I come with suppliant prayers to ask my father to cease from anger, and to join himself with me against my brother; for, so says the oracle, the cause to which thou cleavest shall prevail."

Œdipus answers him sternly:

"Thou, impious son, didst drive forth thy father to beg his bread. Wherefore never shalt thou lay that city waste, but thou thyself shalt fall defiled with blood, and with thee too thy brother. Begone, accursed one, thou hast no more a father; and with thee go a father's curse. Go, tell thy sworn allies what legacy Œdipus has left his sons."

With sad and heavy heart Polynices goes to meet his fate, begging his sister, should his father's curse receive

fulfilment, to give his corpse due funeral rites and burial, and by these loving services to swell the praise which she has earned in caring for her father. Antigone in vain entreats her brother to desist from the unhallowed war and its attendant curse.

“My doom is fixed ; ask nothing to my shame. Fare thee well ! Never wilt thou see my face again ! I will pray for you that ye, my sisters, may meet no harm ; for none so little deserve it.”

The chorus dread the effect of the old man's curse. The air resounds with thunder, and Œdipus longs for Theseus to come ; “now the bolt of Zeus must be his guide to Hades.” Again the awful roll of thunder is heard ; again and again the lightning flashes from heaven. Œdipus knows that now his fate will be fulfilled. Ever around him re-echoes the awful sound. The chorus beg Zeus that he may be gracious to them, and that the curse of the stranger may not bring destruction on them. Again they call the king, who now enters. He too has heard the thunder, and asks their purpose in summoning him. Œdipus replies :

“My life lies in the balance ; now is come the fate I told the citizens and thyself. I will take thee to the spot where I must die ; the secret whereof I bid thee keep, for greater strength than spear or shield shall it give. The place I show thee, do thou reveal to thy firstborn only, and he to his. So shall thy state be

kept unhurt by the dragon's brood of Thebes. Reverence for divine things is the only means to save a nation from sin and punishment. The prompting of the god presses me ; let us go. My children, ye may follow. I will now be the guide, and find the hallowed grave where Hermes and the queen of Hades lead me. For the last time doth the light, which I see not, fall on me. Mayest thou live happy, Theseus, dearest of my friends, thyself, thy country, and thy servants ; and in thy great good fortune think of me when I am in my grave !”

Œdipus leads them away, and the chorus pray the gods below that he may wend his way without long agony to the regions of the dead.

A messenger enters, and announces the death of Œdipus.

“ On he led his companions to the place of the brazen steps which lead down to the world below, at those cross-roads where once Theseus and Peirithous reared a memorial of their everlasting pledge. Between this and the stone of Thoricus, the hollow pear tree, and the stone sepulchre, he sat down and loosed his garments stained with travel, and bade the maidens fetch clear water from the stream for cleansing and libation. And when all this was done, Zeus thundered from the bowels of the earth, and, trembling, the maidens rushed to their father's knees, with loud wailing and beating of the breast. And he, embracing them, said : ‘ My children,

this day ye lose your father. No longer shall ye waste your lives in care for me. Hard it was, I know full well ; yet one word of itself can loose the burden of it, for none has loved you more than I ; and now I pass away, and ye shall live your lives bereft of me.' And all cried and sobbed. Then suddenly some god was heard to cry, so that their hair stood on end : ' Why do we thus delay our going, *Œdipus* ? Too long dost thou linger.' And when he perceived that a god had called him, he spake to *Theseus*, ' Pledge thou thy hand to my daughters here, and ye, my children, yours to him ; and swear that thou wilt never desert them of thine own free will, but wilt ever do for them that which thou judgest best.' This he did, and *Œdipus*, raising his hands above his children's heads, said : ' Now, my children, do ye need to show your courage ; nor think it right to hear or see what is forbidden. Let *Theseus* only stay to see what is to be !' So we all went, and after a little space turning round, we saw the old man no more. *Theseus* alone stood there, with his hand covering his eyes, as though he saw some dread vision he dared not look upon. Soon, bending down, he adored the earth and *Olympus*, seat of the gods. And none but *Theseus* only can ever know the fate that bare him away. It was no thunderbolt, nor whirlwind rising from the sea ; but some messenger of God, or some abyss of earth, which gently took him hence. So he passed without pain or sickness, and his end, if any ever was, was wonderful."

The daughters return with tears and lamentation, and the chorus try to soothe them. Theseus enters and checks their grief.

“It were not right to mourn one to whom death has come as friendly blessing. Ye may not approach, as ye desire, the spot where lies his grave, for he forbade it as he died.”

“Send thou us to Thebes,” the maidens beg of him, “that we may try to avert the death that comes upon our brothers.”

The Athenian king promises to do this, and all that may be best for them and pleasing to him who is gone. And the chorus end with the words :

“Refrain ye then from weeping, cease to mourn ;  
All this is fixed, and naught of all shall fail.”

In no other play of Sophocles is his religious feeling so apparent as in the *Œdipus at Colonus*. “The sanctity of tone throughout harmonizes with the pious, unassuming faith in a divine control. Elevation and serene calmness are united to tenderness and warmth of feeling. The sorrows and melancholy of the first part disappear at the end in a peace that comes from the gods.” In the happy death of the suffering hero there is a profound and touching pathos.

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"ANTIGONE."

Like the swan's death-song, the *Œdipus at Colonus* was the work of the poet's closing days. The *Antigone* however, which was produced in 441 B.C., is the work of a man in the fulness of intellectual vigour. In the former death appears as a painless release, bringing welcome rest to the storm-tossed life; in the latter it is the price paid for undying honour. Life is not the highest good. It is virtue's greatest triumph to sacrifice it to reverence for the gods, and joyfully to lay it down in the cause of sacred justice, and for love of those near and dear to one: "a glorious fate, that raises the mortal to the divine" (*Ant.* 836).

? Contempt of death enables a weak maid to conquer a powerful ruler, who, proud of his human wisdom, ventures in his unbounded insolence to pit his royal word against divine law and human sentiment, and learns all too late, by the destruction of his house, that Fate in due course brings fit punishment on outrage.

The two brothers had fallen in single combat before the walls of Thebes. Creon allowed Eteocles to be buried at once, that he might receive due honour among the shades; but he ordered a herald to forbid any funeral rites or burial to the corpse of Polynices. Let him lie unwept, unburied, a toothsome morsel for



the birds of heaven ; and whoso touches him shall perish by the cruel death of stoning.\*

Antigone tells these tidings to her sister Ismene, and informs her of what she has resolved to do :

“Spite of the orders, I shall give my brother burial, whether thou, Ismene, wilt join with me or not.”

In vain her sister bids her keep in mind the ruin of their house :

“We twain are left alone, and if we brave the king’s decree, an unhappy death awaits us. Weak women such as we cannot strive with men ; rather were it seemly to bow to those that are stronger than ourselves. The dead, who lie below, will deal leniently with us, as forced to yield.”

Antigone answers :

“Gladly will I meet death in my sacred duty to the dead. Longer time have I to spend with them than with those who live upon the earth. Seek not to argue with me ; nothing so terrible can come to me but that an honoured death remains.”

The sisters retire, and the chorus of Theban elders enter. They greet the sun’s bright beams, the fairest light that ever shone on seven-gated Thebes.

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\* This play continues the story of the *Seven against Thebes* of Æschylus, but with essential changes in the situation. See Prof. Jebb’s introduction to the *Antigone*, in his edition of Sophocles.

“For the warrior-host, from Argos sent, which Polynices brought, is gone in headlong flight, ere it was sated with Cadmean blood, and ere the fire of Hephæstus had consumed our towering battlements. Presumptuous insolence has Zeus laid low; and he who boldly rushed high on our towers with cries of victory is hurled headlong by his lightning flash. If round the seven gates of Thebes Ares roused mutual strife, yet there the foreign leaders left their arms as tribute to victorious Zeus: yea, even the two unhappy brothers, who, with their two victorious spears, dealt each other like doom. Wherefore let there be no more thought of war; in stately dance we will surround the temples of the gods, with joyous Bacchus at our head.”

Creon enters, as ruler of the state, to tell the elders of the city why he bade the herald call them to assemble. He announces his decree:

“Honouring the good and punishing the vile, as well beseems a ruler, I have assigned due funeral rites to Eteocles, who died fighting for the fatherland; but Polynices, who sought to make desolate with fire his native city and its gods, and who sought to glut himself with kindred blood and lead our citizens to slavery—to him shall no man give a tomb. Let his body lie mutilated, for a feast to dogs and birds. Therefore have I appointed watchers over his corpse, and do ye watch

yourselves that no one disobey. Greed has often led men to their death."

A guard approaches, reluctantly and with fear.

"But just now," he says, "some one has sprinkled the corpse with dust, and given it funeral rites. Yet there is no sign whose hand it was. One guard accused another ; yet each will by ordeal of fire and sacred oath maintain his innocence. At last we made resolve that we would tell the king this thing ; and the lot fell that I should be the bearer of this unwelcome message."

"Well might this deed," say the chorus, "be the work of the gods."

Creon angrily protests :

"Never would they honour him who threatened their shrines with fire, destruction to their sanctuaries and laws. It is the citizens, who long since have murmured at my rule. They have bribed them to let the deed be done. Therefore I swear, unless ye guards track out the guilty one and bring him here before me, ye shall pay for your neglect by a death of torture, and so shall learn that from base profit comes more loss than gain."

The king passes into the palace. The guard hastens away, thanking the gods that he has come off so well. The chorus sing an ode in praise of man as the mightiest of all mighty things on earth :

“Through the sea’s dark waves he steers his ship, through the surging storm, cleaving the water in his foaming course. Year by year with his deep-furrowing plough he wears the Earth, the puissant Earth. The winged race of birds, the beasts of the forest, and the denizens of the deep he takes, snaring them in his net-work mesh; he brings beneath the yoke the maned horse and tameless mountain ox. Speech and thought are his; he knows how to frame controlling laws, no less than how to escape frost and rain, the missiles of the air. Naught that may come finds him unprepared. Even from fell disease has he contrived to flee; only from Death he will never find escape. Gifted with wondrous skill to plan, he turns him, now to evil, now to good. Shield of the state, when he holds fast his country’s laws and the gods’ sacred right; the state’s destruction, when in his pride he gives himself up to the base. Far may he be from us who dares such deeds!”

The elders see the guards bringing Antigone. They fear that in her folly she has proved a rebel to the king’s decree. The guard confirms their fears: “She was taken,” he says, “in the very act.”

Creon enters, and hears what they have to tell.

“We watchers swept away the dust above the corpse, and lay in wait near it upon the hill. The sun stood in mid-heaven, glowing hot; and suddenly a

whirlwind raised all the dust of the plain, and when at last it was at rest, we saw the maiden, who, with loud wailing, cursed the man who had undone her deed. And she quickly brought in her hands fine dust, and spread it on the corpse a second time, pouring three times libations from a vase of brass. And we, beholding this, quickly hastened to the spot; she let us seize her, nor denied what she had done."

Thus he has spoken, "glad to clear himself from danger, although another must suffer for it."

Antigone, with downcast eyes, in answer to Creon's questions, owns that such had been the case, and does not deny that she had knowledge of the king's decree.

"It was not Zeus or Justice that laid such laws on men. What thou as man didst bid must yield unto the changeless, unwritten word of God; for this is not of to-day, or yesterday, but lives for ever; no man knows when first it came to be. I must fear God's wrath, not reverence man's decrees. I knew well that I should die. Yet, apart from thy decree, death is my fate, and to die before my time seems gain amid the many woes that fall on me. I should have suffered had I left my brother without burial; but in this I suffer not."

The king rebukes her insolence. "To dare such a deed, and to pride herself upon it!"

"If scatheless thou dost this thing, then thou, not I, wert the man. No; our kindred blood shall not help thee now, nor thy sister, who, sharing thy guilt, has fled to the house."

Antigone bids them not delay her death:

"Glorious shall be my name, and these old men here would not grudge me their applause, did not fear close their mouths. Death claims like rites for all. What matters it, since my brother is dead, whether he came as enemy to the state? I shared his love, but not his hate."

"If thou must love, then go to the grave and love. While I live, a woman shall never conquer me."

Ismene enters, with tears upon her cheeks, and acknowledges herself her sister's accomplice, worthy of like punishment. But Antigone will not allow her the right to die with her, and with her to glorify the dead, for she neither wished the deed nor shared it. "Thou soughtest only life, helping not the dead."

Ismene turns to Creon: "Slay not thy son's betrothed."

Creon is implacable: "Let death break off the marriage; my son shall wed no maiden such as this." He bids them lead the maidens to the house, and guard them: "For even the boldest seek to fly at death's approach."

The chorus extol the blessings of an innocent happiness :

“Never does the curse, creeping from sire to son, leave those whose house the gods have shaken. Old is the woe in the seed of Labdacus, and ever falls new woe upon the woes of those that perished long ago ; nor can the new-born free the race, but some god still lays it low ; nor have these evils any end. On these last scions there shone a happier light ; but now they too perish overwhelmed in the blood-stained dust of the dead, and ruined by rash word and frenzied thought. What boastful mortal can constrain the power of Zeus, who ever wakes and grows not old, and brings all things to their appointed goal ! He ever dwells in the bright light of far Olympus, and his law ever holds that mortal life may never pass untouched by woe. Hopes solace men and the fond wishes of their eager hearts, and all unconsciously they set their feet upon the flame. Wisely was it said of old,

That evil ever seems to be as good

To those whose thoughts of heart

God leadeth unto woe,

And without woe he spends but shortest space of time.”

Hæmon, son of Creon, enters, bowed down with grief for Antigone, the betrothed bride of whom Creon threatens to rob him.

“Willingly, my father, have I ever observed thy

counsels; with me no alliance can outweigh them; wherefore now I dare, as none else might, to speak such words as may displease you. The citizens of Thebes lament among themselves, that this maiden's noblest deed, which shall be for ever glorious, must bring her unjust death, for that she did not leave her brother's corpse a prey to dogs and birds. To me thy glory is my highest aim; therefore I pray thee change thy harsh resolve, and do not be too stern. For when the woodland stream rushes wildly by, the tree that will not yield perishes root and branch, while that which bends before the storm is left uninjured. So too the ship is wrecked whose steersman will not slack his sails. 'Tis true that I am young; yet from the young comes often prudent counsel. It is well to learn from him who speaks with understanding, and to consider his deeds rather than his years."

The king will not listen to the youth's advice, nor yield to what opposes him; little cares he what the citizens may say, the state is but its lord's possession. He mocks at Hæmon as a slave of love, his bride's ally.

"She shall never live to be thy bride. Lead her out, the wretch, to die before her bridegroom's eyes."

"She shall never die while I am near; and thou, my father, shalt look upon my face no more."

Thus speaking, Hæmon rushes forth, leaving the



chorus in fear of approaching calamity. But Creon is unmoved.

"Ismene shall not die," he says ; " but Antigone shall find a living tomb. Set beside her only a little food that shall avert all guilt of blood. Then let her pray to Hades, the only god she worships, to rescue her ; and she perchance shall see how fruitless is man's worship of Death."

He goes, and the chorus celebrate the praise of Eros :

"O Love, in every battle victor owned ;  
Love, rushing on thy prey,  
Now on a maiden's soft and blooming cheek  
In secret ambush hid ;  
Now o'er the broad sea wandering at will ;  
And now in shepherd's folds !  
Of all the Undying Ones none 'scape from thee,  
Nor yet of mortal men  
Whose lives are measured as a fleeting day ;  
And who has thee is frenzied in his soul.  
Thou makest vile the purpose of the just,  
To his own fatal harm ;  
Thou hast stirred up this fierce and deadly strife  
Of men of nearest kin ;  
The charm of eyes of bride beloved and fair  
Is crowned with victory,  
And dwells on high among the powers that rule,  
Equal with holiest laws ;  
For Aphrodite, she whom none subdues,  
Sports in her might and majesty divine."

To their deep grief the chorus now behold Antigone,

led to that bride-chamber of Hades where all must lie. She calls the citizens of her native town to witness her last journey, as she passes, alive, alone, with no marriage hymn, to Acheron's bridal bower. The chorus comfort her :

"Eternal honour and great glory shalt thou have, who passest of thy free will to Hades, in full life, not smitten down by sickness or the sword."

"Like Niobe, I meet a piteous doom, imprisoned in the binding rock."

"It is great fame, to share in death the fate of mighty gods."

"Oh mockery! Unwept I pass to that grave-prison, there to dwell nor with the dead nor living."

"Thou payest for thy boldness and thy father's guilt."

"I share the fateful doom of the house of Labdacus. My brother, dead, now slays me living."

"Thou hast thyself rushed upon destruction, thyself scorning the mighty."

"Unwept, unloved, unwedded, I pass along my destined path. It will not be mine in death to see the holy orb of heaven, to hear the wailing of love."

Creon entering, bids them lead her quickly to the darkness of the dungeon-grave.

"O tomb, my bridal chamber, vaulted home,  
Guarded right well for ever, where I go  
To join mine own, of whom the greater part

Among the dead doth Persephassa hold ;  
And I, of all the last and saddest, wend  
My way below, life's little span unfilled.  
And yet I go, and feed myself with hopes  
That I shall meet them, by my father loved,  
Dear to my mother, well-beloved of thee,  
Thou darling brother ; I, with these my hands,  
Washed each dear corpse, arrayed you, poured libations,  
In rites of burial ; and in care for thee,  
Thy body, Polynices, honouring,  
I gain this recompense.  
And therefore, giving thee the foremost place,  
I seemed in Creon's eyes, O brother dear,  
To sin in boldest daring. Therefore now  
He leads me, having taken me by force,  
Cut off from marriage-bed and marriage-song,  
Untasting wife's true joy or mother's bliss  
With infant at her breast, but all forlorn,  
Bereaved of friends, in utter misery,  
Alive, I tread the chambers of the dead.  
What law of Heaven have I transgressed against ?  
What use for me, ill-starred one, still to look  
To any god for succour, or to call  
On any friend for aid ? For holiest deed  
I bear this charge of rank unholiness.  
If acts like these the gods on high approve,  
We, taught by pain, shall own that we have sinned ;  
But if these sin, I pray they suffer not  
Worse evils than the wrongs they do to me."

Again Creon commands the guards to lead her straight to her doom. The unhappy victim calls upon the city, the gods, the chief citizens of Thebes, to behold the things she suffers, the daughter of the king,

last scion of the royal race, and to mark by whom her sufferings are inflicted, for honouring where honour was due.

Antigone is led away, and the chorus liken her sufferings to those of Danaë, whom Zeus visited as a stream of gold, shut in her brazen tower :

“So great the might of Destiny, which neither arms nor wealth, neither tower nor wave-beaten ship can escape. So too the son of Dryas, king of the Edonians, Dionysus bound in punishing prison of stone, when his pride and insolence moved the god to anger ; for he commanded silence to the troop of god-filled mænads with their Bacchic light of torch, and roused the ire of the flute-loving Muses. So also upon the shores of Bosphorus with bloody hands and spindle Phineus’ wife smote her two stepsons’ eyes. And there they wasted away in misery, whose mother, born of old Erechtheus’ race, daughter of Boreas, swift as the steed, was reared a daughter of the gods, in distant caves on lofty crags swept by her father’s winds. And yet the ancient Fates overtook her too.”

Tiresias enters, led by a boy, to tell the king what he, as a seer, has learnt :

“Thy fate rests on a razor’s edge. For being upon my ancient seat I heard a strange sound of birds, unwelcome cries ; I heard clearly the rustling of their wings, as with murderous claws they tore each other’s

flesh. And then in fear I tried the altar-signs. Alas! there flamed no glancing fire from the sacrifice; but there oozed a moisture upon the ashes, the gall was scattered to the air, and the thigh-bones fell out of the fat that wrapped them. The gods are wrath for the sake of Œdipus' unhappy son. Bethink thee well, O king, that all men may err; yet must they, taught wisdom, turn their thoughts to better things. An unyielding mind is guilty of stubbornness. There is no prowess in slaying the slain. Wherefore do what my good counsel bids, for it brings profit."

Creon answers with mockery :

"Keep thy profit for thyself: the seer's art is ever rich in gold. No; no tomb shall ever hide that corpse, not even if Zeus' eagles should tear his flesh and bear it to the very throne of God."

"Soon," says the seer, "shall vengeance plunge thee in like woe! Soon in thy house shall the wail of men and women sound. The city too must share thy doom; dogs violate the dead, and birds bear carrion to the skies!"

Thus he threatens the king, and departs into the house, guided by the boy.

The chorus are filled with dread foreboding, for never yet has Tiresias made false prophecy; and the king too trembles; yet were it cowardly to yield. "Follow good counsel, Creon; bury the corpse, and loose the

maiden from her tomb", cry the chorus. At last, with reluctant heart, the king consents: "Thither will I hasten; quickly follow me to yonder place, and I, who bound her, there will set her free." So he goes, and the chorus pray Bacchus to "help the city, where he with his mother, whom the lightning slew, was honoured above all others; for now it lies in sore distress."

A messenger arrives and says:

"Ye men of Cadmus, suddenly has passed the long good fortune of our king; for Hæmon lies dead, slain by his own hand in wrath against his father's deed."

Eurydice, the wife of Creon, enters from the house. She too has heard the news, as she hastened to pray in the temple of Pallas. Yet she will hear the horror once again.

The messenger relates his tale:

"I followed in attendance to the place where the body of Polynices lay, mangled by the dogs. And having prayed the goddess of the roads and the lord of Hades graciously to cease from wrath, we washed him with holy water, and what was left we burnt with branches freshly cut, and reared him in his native soil a lofty monument. Then we hastened to the stone-paved home, the maiden's marriage-chamber, where she wedded with death. There a servant heard a low wailing, and in haste told this to Creon. He too had heard

a confused murmur, and groaning he cried: 'Woe, woe is me! This way, so tells my heart, is dreariest of all that I have ever trod. My son's voice greets me. Quick, ye servants, go; look through the narrow opening in the stone, and tell me if it be the voice of Hæmon that I hear, or if the gods deceive me.' Following our lord's command, we saw the maiden's body hanging at the back of the vault, her neck entwined by a linen band; and Hæmon we found embracing her, and weeping for the bride of whom his father's act had robbed him. Then Creon, seeing him, groaned bitterly aloud, and called to him, wailing: 'Poor boy! what hast thou done? Art thou mad? Come out, my child! See, on my knees, I pray thee, come!' He turned on his father his wild, fierce-glaring eyes, and, ever silent, drew his sword and rushed on him. But his father avoided the blow. Then in anger with himself, deep in his side he thrust the blade, and laying his faint arm around the maid, gasped out his life in streams of blood. Now he lies, dead, beside his dead bride, and has held, poor youth! his marriage-rite in Hades."

Without a word Eurydice, having heard the tale, departs. The chorus are alarmed, and the messenger full of wonder; yet he comforts himself with the hope that she did not wish to show her mourning to the common gaze, but to bewail her woe at home.

"Too trained a judgment has she so to err."

"Deep silence," say the chorus, "no less than loud cries, is proof of bitter woe."

Creon enters with his son's body. He curses himself as the murderer of his child. Some evil power has smitten him and shattered all his joy.

A servant comes to announce his wife's death. The body lies close at hand, and the king must lament for the loss of both son and wife.

"She fell," says the servant, "pierced with wounds from her own hands beside the altar of the house, wailing the fate of Megareus, her youngest born, and now of Hæmon, and last of all she called a curse of bitter woe on thee, the murderer of thy sons."

Creon bids them slay him too :

"No one is guilty of the deed but I alone. Would that the last blessing might come to me, the day that ends my life ! Lead me then forth, a thing of naught, who slew his son and wife ! All is lost ; and on my head is a doom too hard to bear."

He is led away, and the chorus conclude with the words :

"Man's highest blessedness  
In wisdom chiefly stands ;  
And in the things that touch upon the gods  
'Tis best, in word or deed,  
To shun unholy pride.



Great words of boasting bring great punishments,  
And so to gray-haired age  
Teach wisdom at the last."

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The *Antigone* indisputably belongs to the best work of Sophocles; indeed, most modern critics rank it above *Ædipus the King*. "The *Antigone*," says Bernhardy, "must be received as the 'canon' of ancient tragedy; no tragedy of antiquity that we possess approaches it in pure idealism, or in harmony of artistic development. It is the first poem produced by the union of the whole strength of the resources of which tragedy was capable; of all the extant works of Sophocles it is the most perfect; no other exhibits such a striking combination of subject, language, and technique. Its greatness lies in its perfect regularity of action, its richness of ideas, its true and living characters,—qualities brought to perfection by the splendour of its dialogue and odes."

According to Demosthenes (*De Fals. Leg.* 247)—and there is no reason to question the correctness of the statement—Antigone was the part of the protagonist, and Creon that of the tritagonist.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EURIPIDES.

“Our Euripides the Human,  
With his droppings of warm tears  
And his touches of things common  
Till they rose to touch the spheres.”

MRS. BROWNING.

EURIPIDES, the third of the tragic triad, was the son of Mnesarchus, and according to the general tradition was born at Salamis on the day of the victory in ol. 75 (480 B.C.). According to the table known as “the Parian marble” his birth fell four or five years earlier than this. Euripides came of a good stock,\* although his parents do not seem to have lived in particularly brilliant circumstances. The comic writers jestingly make his mother Cleito a seller of vegetables. He had certainly the advantage of a careful education. It is said that an answer of the oracle promised his father a son who, “honoured by all men, should win great reputation, and bind his brows with the sweet reward of consecrated wreaths”; and that he was accordingly destined for an athlete, and even won some athletic prizes. However the oracle was to be fulfilled in another way; for he

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\* Athen. x., p. 424 F.

soon entered the arena of poetry, and there achieved a more enduring fame. The philosopher Anaxagoras had an important influence on his development,\* and perhaps he may have to thank the sophists Protagoras and Prodicus for the sophistical and rhetorical mannerism which appears in his writings. He was also a friend and admirer of Socrates. He lived a retired and rather misanthropic life, and, happy in the possession of a considerable library, spent most of his time in literary work and composition. In later times there was still shown in the island of Salamis a dark cave, in which, according to Philochorus, he composed the bulk of his tragedies. But in spite of the retirement in which he lived, he took a lively interest in the political events of the day and in all questions of public life. He married twice, both times unhappily. His youngest son, who was also called Euripides, produced some of his father's tragedies after his death. Euripides competed for the first time in his twenty-fifth year ol. 81, 1 (455 B.C.) with a tetralogy, to which belonged the *Daughters of Pelias*; but it was not until his forty-third year that he gained his first victory. He won the first prize four times only during his life, and once after his death. After the production of his *Orestes* in ol. 92, 4 (409 B.C.) he left Athens, being annoyed, it is supposed, by the jests of the comedians, or else from domestic unhap-

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\* Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* iii. 14.

piness. He went first to Magnesia, where he met with a hospitable reception, and afterwards to Pella, the court of Archelaus, king of Macedonia, who had at that time drawn together a number of poets and artists. He was received with great honour by the king, and lived there until his death in ol. 93, 4 (405 B.C.). Little reliance can be placed on the truth of the story that he was torn to pieces by the king's hounds as he was returning one night from a banquet. The Macedonians erected him a tomb in a pleasant spot to commemorate his imperishable fame, and the Athenians, who demanded his bones in vain, built a magnificent cenotaph to his memory.

Euripides was a voluminous writer. According to some accounts he wrote seventy-five, and according to others seventy-eight pieces, of which eight were satyric plays. Others again give the number as ninety-two, but they probably include the second versions. We have still eighteen of his tragedies: the *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Bacchæ*, *Hecuba*, *Helena*, *Electra*, *Heracleidæ*, *Madness of Heracles*, *Suppliant Women*, *Hippolytus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Iphigenia among the Tauri*, *Ion*, *Medea*, *Orestes*, *Rhesus*, *Women of Troy*, *Women of Tyre* (*Phænissæ*). In addition to these there is a satyric drama, the *Cyclops*. The *Rhesus* was declared to be spurious even in ancient times. Of the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which received the prize after the poet's death, we probably have a garbled version. Other pieces have

been altered, for later representation, in single scenes, and have suffered various interpolations. Much of the poet's best and most popular work has been lost. Numerous fragments have come down to us from about sixty plays, including eight satyric dramas; the most important of these are from the *Andromeda*, *Bellerophon*, *Erechtheus*, and *Phaëthion*.

It is by no means an easy matter to estimate correctly the quality of Euripides as a poet. In his works good and bad follow each other in quick succession. Some of his pieces, *e.g.* the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchæ*, are as good as any work of Sophocles. Some, like the *Medea*, *Ion*, *Iphigenia among the Tauri*, hold the attention by their clever dramatic situations, their originality in presentation of character, their many isolated beauties, and their richness in apophthegm or epigram. Others, on the other hand, such as the *Andromache* and *Electra*, are poor and careless in execution throughout. The remarkable inequality of his writings leads us to the conclusion that in Euripides we have a man who, highly gifted though he was, had not formed any steady and consistent conception of poetic drama. He strikes us as a man who sometimes experimented with his art, and who was unduly dependent on the chance impressions of the moment and a variable state of mind. Euripides, as he is the most modern, is also the most interesting of the Greek poets, and has had a far-reaching influence over sub-

sequent poetry. He has been called a Romantic among the classical dramatists, or an old-world prophet of the *Welt-Schmerz* ;\* but such cant-phrases as these are very liable to give false impressions. It is impossible rightly to understand his nature without due consideration of the period to which he belonged. Even the clearest thinker cannot escape the influence of his age; how much less then can the poet, who draws from it the inspiration for his creations, and in return marks it with the impress of his genius! Æschylus, the veteran of Marathon, is the dramatist of the Athenian heroic age. Sophocles reflects in his noble creations the cultured spirit of the age of Pericles, and transmits it in its purity to succeeding times. Euripides is the dramatist of the Peloponnesian War and the ochlocracy.† In the course of this period however was completed a mighty revolution throughout Greece in every relation of life. It was at this time that the spirit of Greece first began, in its focus at Athens, to free itself from the good old traditions in matters of State, custom, and religious feeling. Pericles had established a pure democracy; he had invited the whole body of citizens to liberty and intellectual culture. But with his death liberty degenerated into

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\* The "world-pain"; i.e. one of the pessimistic school of poets who emphasise the fact that man is born to sorrow.

† Mob-government, as opposed to democracy, the government of the people by themselves.

license ; and culture, spreading among a wider circle, soon became superficial. With the change from democracy to ochlocracy public life lost its dignity more and more, and the deterioration of morals struck still deeper into all the relations of family life. The noble struggle against the Persians for freedom and fatherland had raised the Greeks both politically and morally. On the other hand, the Peloponnesian War, waged by Greek against Greek, little by little, like some foul cancer, drew away the whole strength of the body, and finally led to its general dissolution. All feeling for true greatness and nobility was lost, and moral insensibility decked itself with the empty names of them. At Athens men's minds were filled with a restless desire and striving after novelty. The less the results of Athenian politics came up to their conception of the greatness of the sovereign *demos*, the more did men question the existing principles of public duty and morality, hitherto regarded as fundamental. A new age produced a new race, frivolous and artificial, without mental or moral balance, doomed to intellectual blindness, and guided in its political aims by the most unreasoning selfishness. The more cultivated sort tried, by means of political trials, party strife, proscription of the rich, litigious wrangling, and a truly democratic mistrust of all existing institutions, to stifle the inner unrest of their minds, and to escape the dark influence of a period which was ever growing



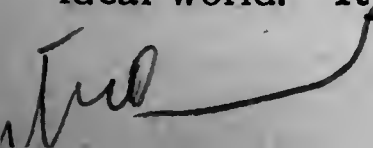
more gloomy. In this way they lost all capacity for simple pleasures. Faith in the old gods quickly vanished, and with it the moral significance of the religious myths. Its place was taken in some minds by a dreary superstition, in others by an unsound intellectualism. Loss of faith in the gods involved a similar loss of faith in the divine in man; this was followed by a gross materialism, which found its greatest happiness in enjoyment, its greatest pain in self-denial. Family ties became laxer; loose connexions, tolerated though not approved by public opinion, destroyed the sanctity of the marriage-bond. All faith in woman's dignity and virtue disappeared, and men avenged by hatred and scorn the indignity they had themselves inflicted on the weaker sex. The *hetæraæ*, who had once been, as they were called, "companions", had become mere mercenaries; and they bore much the same relation to Aspasia of Miletus, whom Pericles had made his consort, as Phæax and Hyperbolus did to that statesman himself. A certain general culture, consisting mainly in mere cleverness of style and rhetoric, and derived chiefly from the sophists, aggravated the universal confusion and instability of mind by the deceptive appearance of solidity. From these blighting influences even the better natures, men morally and mentally superior to their fellows, could not wholly escape.<sup>29</sup>

On the principles of this later age rests the whole char-

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acter of Euripides. Far from approving the destructive tendencies of the time, he held aloof from public life on principle, and his private life was blameless; but he was permeated through and through with that spirit of boundless subjectivity, and the sceptical moral paralysis resulting from it, which was the special characteristic of the age of ochlocracy. He was a keen observer of human life and its ceaseless whirl of passions. In art he was a consistent realist. Sophocles in a pregnant sentence which has been already quoted, points out the contrast between Euripides and himself; the one paints men as they are, the other as they should be.<sup>30</sup> On this account Euripides was rarely able in his creations to rise to the level of the idealistic conceptions of his predecessors. Nor indeed did he wish it. His object was rather to take as the theme of poetry, and of tragedy, which is the highest manifestation of poetry, the actual every-day world in which he lived, and which his keen artistic eye searched to the depths, although he but half understood the connexion of the things which he saw. Unfortunately, he was in tragedy tied down to a conventional treatment of the myths of gods and heroes, and though he altered them in certain cases to suit his purposes, he dared not abandon them altogether.<sup>31</sup> This involved him in a dilemma, for he was compelled to introduce events of every-day life as the actions of mythological characters belonging to an ideal world. It was on this incongruity that he was so



often wrecked, in spite of his great gifts as a dramatist. It is indeed the source of almost all his literary faults. His determination was to make of tragedy an instrument to work upon the minds of his time. He was always seeking after new guides to the solution of the ethical problems which confronted him daily, and thus it came about that in his poetry the fulness of thought and idea was often too much for clearness of form and artistic composition. In comparing therefore the dramatic art of Euripides with that of Æschylus and Sophocles, we find that in his hands the drama shows signs of decadence, although he won new worlds for the poet's art. That which Euripides saw in a vision, but with the artistic means of his time could not possibly realize, has become the very substance of modern poetry. Our tragic writers have a better material, a long series of interesting historical characters, whom they can depict at the momentous crises of their lives, and who may be made to represent in ever-changing combinations the common traits of human nature. Euripides is unsurpassed in his representation of actual human passion, and in depicting the casuistical sophistry with which men seek to palliate to themselves or others offences against the moral law. It is in this sense that his treatment of tragedy has been said to be peculiarly "pathological." He makes a special study of the nature of women, and their "dæmonic" possession by passionate love, against which the voice of reason is

utterly powerless. But, in order to reproduce in his plays the actual passions of every-day life, he was compelled to bring down the heroes from those ideal heights of plot and passion on which Sophocles had left them, and to place them on the ordinary level of common human nature. Indeed, he does not hesitate to put in their mouths all the questions, thoughts, and problems which were then wildly surging through the brains of his fellow Athenians and himself. It is indeed very strange to hear heroes and demi-gods, who live in daily converse with the gods and goddesses, debating like so many sophists the very existence of divine beings, or criticising their actions according to the moral standards of the age of Socrates, or unceremoniously upbraiding them with their many vices. Thus Heracles, after killing his wife and children in a fit of insanity, determines to take his own life, and explains to Theseus the reasons which led him to this resolve. "Zeus, whoe'er he be," he says, "begat me to be Hera's foe." Then he goes on to speak of Hera thus :

"Let her triumph, then, the haughty wife of Zeus, and tread proudly on sandalled foot through the Olympian halls. For she has had her will, and with stress and trouble has utterly undone the greatest man in Greece. Who would honour such a goddess as she is, who for a woman's sake, grudging the love of Zeus, has destroyed the saviour of Greece for no guilt of his?"

Theseus answers that plainly it is no other than Hera who has undone Heracles.

"But," he says, "no mortal man may go unscathed, nay, nor god either, if poets' tales be true. Have they not wedded whom it was not meet? Have they not laid chains upon a father to win a throne? Yet do they dwell in Olympus, and repent not their deeds."

But Heracles concludes :

"I cannot think that the gods wed whom they may not, nor have I ever held, nor ever will, that they bind those whom it is not meet, nor that one god is lord of another. For a god, if he be indeed god, has need of naught. These are but slandering poets' tales." \*

In the same way Euripides brings on the stage many characters from the heroic world who are heretical respecting the just government of the gods, who cannot recognise the hand of any controlling providence in the pain and misery of this world, and who, in fact, deny the very existence of the divine. This attempt of the poet to humanise the legendary figures of mythology, and to represent them, not as mere types of immeasurable antiquity, but as living men and women of flesh and blood, has led him into some strange confusions, of which his treatment of the Electra legend affords a striking example. It was this too that compelled him to preface his plays with an introductory prologue,†

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\* *Herc. Fur.* 1325 seq.

† The *Rhesus* (spurious) and *Iphigenia at Aulis* are the only plays without this prologue, and of the latter we have only a later version. In the *Women of Troy* the prologue becomes a dialogue between Poseidon and Athena.

which should prepare the audience for the changes he intended to make in the myth, which otherwise might have caused embarrassment.<sup>32</sup> After what has been said it will occasion little surprise to find that Euripides, in his character of a zealous democrat, seems purposely to draw his kings as rude tyrants, without either honour or dignity. His heroes are seldom heroic, except when heroism is free from danger. Thus in the *Orestes*, when Orestes and Pylades murder Helen, the cowardly pair gain admittance to her chamber by a subterfuge, having previously got her servants away, and then carry off Hermione, the daughter of Menelaus, as security against punishment.<sup>33</sup> So again in the *Andromache* Orestes with equal cowardice rids himself of his rival Neoptolemus at Delphi, where he rouses the people against him by a lying story. In the *Helena* Menelaus cheats Theoclymenus by a stratagem, and thus recovers his wife. In the *Hecuba* Odysseus offers coarse insults to the unhappy lady who is his prisoner.

Thus it is clear that the dramatic art of Euripides was on every side at variance with that of his predecessors, and indeed with the principles of ancient art in general. He lacked the sense of artistic combination. His entire treatment of a story is often completely conditioned by the narrow limits of common life ; his plots often turn upon some intrigue, subtly conceived and successfully carried through ; their construction is in

some cases extremely careless, the events following one another in no necessary sequence. The impression left by single isolated situations, which depend for their effect on some sentimental touch rather than on any true connexion with the tragedy, is often greater than the impression made by the action of the play as a whole. Many of his pieces defy analysis; they are mere conglomerations of loosely linked scenes, devoid of any real connexion. They are full of oddities. In the *Suppliants* Theseus with some reluctance is induced to intercede on behalf of the relatives of the Argives, who had fallen in battle before Thebes, and to whom Creon had refused burial; and he threatens in the event of refusal to bring Thebes to reason by force of arms. A herald is despatched to carry this message to the king, just as Theseus sees a Theban herald approaching. He enters and asks for the king of the country. Theseus interrupts him with the remark that seeing he has come to a free land, there is no need to ask for a king there. Then a discussion follows between the two, the herald upholding the cause of monarchy, Theseus that of democracy. This controversy has not the slightest connexion with the plot of the play; it is the emptiest political speechifying. It becomes absolutely ridiculous when Theseus, who had originally prevented the herald from fulfilling his commission, concludes thirty lines of encomium upon democracy by saying:

"But what hast thou come to ask of this city? Thou shouldest have repented thy coming, hadst thou not been the messenger of Thebes; for it becomes a herald to speak what has been charged him, and be gone quickly. In future, I hope Creon to my city will send a less prating messenger."

Upon which the two continue the discussion for 120 lines more. It was quite open to the poet to make Theseus incidentally the mouthpiece of his political opinions. It is true enough that in real life one who talks too much charges his companion with being a chatterbox, and in comedy it might have made a hit. In tragedy such a sally is destructive of all illusion.<sup>34</sup> As the play proceeds, Theseus resolves on going to war with Creon, and proceeds to carry out his intention. A choral ode of modest length helps us through the campaign. Its last strains have scarcely died away when the news of Theseus' victory arrives. An Argive messenger follows with a full description of the battle. Then another ode and Theseus appears, accompanied by stretchers bearing the bodies of the heroes who fell before Thebes. Capaneus, who was struck dead by lightning, is to receive separate rites; but the bodies of the others are burnt on the same pyre. The pyre for Capaneus is quickly erected and a torch applied. Then suddenly appears Evadne, the dead man's wife, and determines to seek death in the same flames. In vain does Iphis, her father, bowed with grief, hasten after her and attempt to turn her from her purpose. Bravely,



before his eyes, she throws herself upon the burning pyre.

All this is undeniably very affecting, but the circumstances of the play make it as improbable as it well could be. After the departure of Capaneus, Evadne had been confined in her father's house; she has eluded his vigilance in an unguarded moment, and, all alone, hurries straight to Athens, to arrive there at the very moment that the flames from the funeral pyre of Capaneus are shooting up to the sky; Iphis has followed her, and, as a matter of course, to Athens, both reaching the same spot at the very same time, he but to witness her romantic death! 'Yet the poet did not think it worth while to prepare us in the least for the imminent arrival of Evadne and her father, though it could have been done easily enough.

The *Alcestis* is a good instance of the little trouble Euripides sometimes took in the composition of his pieces. According to a still extant scholium, the play came as a fourth piece after three tragedies, and was produced in 438 (ol. 85, 2). Though not properly speaking a satyric drama, it may well be considered a *δρᾶμα σατυρικότερον*. Admetus, the hospitable king of Pheræ, in Thessaly, has by grace of Apollo obtained from the Fates the favour of escaping death, if he can find any one ready to die in his stead. His wife Alcestis is prepared to take his place. After the prologue and a dialogue between Apollo and Thanatos,



the god of death, in which we are prepared for the arrival of Heracles, the chorus, filled with anxiety, appear before the palace. Admetus and Alcestis come out. In some most touching lines, Alcestis takes leave of life, her husband and her children, and as she dies commends the children to her husband's care. After Admetus has given directions for her burial, and the chorus have once more praised their mistress's virtues, Heracles suddenly appears. He is on his way to the Bistones to fetch the steeds of Diomedes, and asks for hospitality, which is granted him. Admetus informs him that he is in mourning, and about to bury a lady, but he does not tell him that she is his wife Alcestis; and so Heracles enters the guest-chamber, and gives himself up to feasting and drinking. Then Pheres, father of Admetus, appears with some adornment for the dead. Admetus will have nothing to do with him. In his opinion his father should have died for him, instead of letting Alcestis sink to the grave in all her bloom of youth. "Is death," he asks, "alike then to the old and to the young?" The old man taunts him with his cowardice, and after a long dialogue in alternate verses, leaves in anger. Then enters one of Admetus' servants, who has been entertaining Heracles and bearing him company. He is greatly indignant at the unwelcome burden of the guest's presence. Heracles now enters from the palace, laughs at the servant's solemn face, and gaily recommends the philosophy of

the "*carpe diem*." He is astonished to hear at last that Admetus is mourning his wife Alcestis, and not, as he has hitherto let himself be persuaded, some mere friend. At once he resolves to snatch her from the god of death, and if he cannot succeed in that, to bring her back even from the world of shades. Presently Admetus returns from his wife's burial, and vents his grief in moving accents. The chorus seek to comfort him as best they may. Meantime Heracles has recovered Alcestis, and brings her back still veiled in her shroud. He represents her as a prize casually won in an athletic contest, and asks Admetus to keep her for him till his return from Thrace. When and where this contest took place no one ever learns. It could not have happened in the short time since Admetus had last spoken to Heracles and buried his wife; if it happened before, Heracles must have brought her with him when he first came. The tale of Heracles is therefore in the highest degree improbable, but for that Euripides cares little. Admetus at first protests against receiving the unknown lady, whose figure reminds him of Alcestis. More than once, by touching words, he lets us see how near his dead wife lay to his heart, and how much he holds her memory in honour. At length he gives way, and offers with his own hand to lead the strange lady within the palace. Scarce has he touched her, when Heracles withdraws her veil, and shows the astonished

husband who it is whose hand he holds. Great is his joy. In few words Heracles relates how he wrestled with Death for her; and bids her not speak for the next three days. She has been standing by in silence since the veil was withdrawn. Heracles then prepares for his journey, and promises to visit them again on his return. Admetus gives orders for festivities of every kind, and the play ends with some commonplace remarks from the chorus on the strange changes of fate accomplished by the gods. As for any explanation between Admetus and his deeply wounded father, it is wholly forgotten.

Now we are told nothing as to the means which made it possible to bring Alcestis back to life, and to restore the soul to her body. We must be content with the fact that the heroic strength of Heracles accomplished the feat; as to the means we must not ask. That the poet should expect us to accept things so obscure and improbable to the imagination is too much. How careless he could be in this respect the following instance will show. At line 608 the body of Alcestis is borne to the pyre; at line 740 the body is about to be placed on the pyre; and yet at line 836 Alcestis is lying in her grave, without a word being said of the burning of her body. In line 898 we learn from the mouth of Admetus himself that his wife has been laid in her grave; he laments that they have hindered him from lying at her side. The only con-

clusion is that she is not burnt at all, and this is verified by the finale of the play. For had she been burnt Heracles could not have brought her back alive. In that case, what are we to make of the repeated references to the funeral pyre?

And yet the *Alcestis* is a magnificent play and full of the truest poetry. The scene between Admetus and his gray-headed father, however startling it may be to modern ideas, is marked by deep psychological insight. It is in full accord with human nature for Admetus not to feel the least remorse in accepting the supreme sacrifice of his wife, and yet to be so overcome with grief, as to be in the highest degree unjust to his own father. We find an example of a similar fidelity to nature in the *Iliad*, when the aged Priam, in his grief for the loss of his dearly loved Hector, drives forth with insult his remaining sons.

If the dramatic construction of the *Alcestis* is imperfect, that of the *Andromache*<sup>35</sup> is absolutely offensive. The play opens with the discovery of Hector's wife, who is held in captivity by Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles. In Neoptolemus' absence, Hermione, his wife, aided by her father Menelaus, attempts to take the lives of Andromache and her son Molossus. Peleus, father of Achilles and grandfather of Neoptolemus, arrives in time to rescue them, and Hermione is left to dread the wrath of her husband when he returns. By chance Orestes comes that way on his journey to

Dodona; he renews his former suit for Hermione's hand, and promises to take her to her native place, and to kill her husband, against whom he has an old grudge, at Delphi. Hermione consents to fly with him. After a few words from the chorus, Peleus enters again, to ask if there is any truth in the report which has reached his ear of Hermione's flight. Almost immediately a messenger comes with the news of the death of his grandson Neoptolemus, who had met his end through Orestes' craft at Delphi. Then to the sorrowing old man appears his wife, the sea-goddess Thetis, and bids him cease his lament. Let him despatch Andromache with her child to Molossia; there she will marry Helenus, and her children shall happily reign. He must bury his grandson at Delphi. Hereafter, freed as a god from human ills, he will dwell with his wife Thetis in the halls of Nereus, and see once more his son Achilles.

In this play there is no pretension to unity of action or any dramatic connexion between individual scenes. Andromache disappears in the middle, without any one knowing where she has gone. Her fate is once mentioned, and that quite incidentally, at the very end of the piece. The "unity" of time is perpetually violated in the most irritating manner. Repeatedly the choral odes are made to carry us over incommensurable periods. The entrances and exits of the characters are in most cases made without any reference

to the plot, and are often simply ludicrous; as for instance, when Orestes, coming from Delphi, makes a *détour* to Phthia to ask news of Hermione, thence to continue his journey to the temple of Dodona. The poet makes no allusion to the fact that he must be wearied from his journey. As soon as he enters, straight from the highway, Hermione throws herself at his feet, and begs that she may accompany him. Orestes at once promises to take her to her father; there is no further mention of the journey to Dodona; and Hermione, just as she is, and without more ado, is off and away! What room is there here for dramatic propriety? Now let us consider the characters of the piece. Andromache, without dignity or pride, is not ashamed, in her opposition to Hermione's malice, to drag her own sex through the mire. Menelaus is a pitiable, mean old man, an unprincipled Spartan, who at the critical moment cowardly grovels in the dust, and leaves his daughter in a miserable plight, after being the accomplice in her shameful attempt. She herself is a fitting daughter for such a sire, utterly devoid of conscience. Arrogantly boastful of her Spartan birth and the wealth which gives her the position she holds, as long as she has her father's support she is full of malicious lust for vengeance; as soon as he has disappeared, she becomes desperate and contemptible, laying the burden of her crimes on those wicked women by whom she has been instigated. It has been

suggested that the *Andromache*, like the *Alcestis* and *Orestes*, was the fourth piece of a tetralogy, and was intended to relax the feelings of the audience rather than to keep them in a condition of high-strung excitement. But that cannot excuse the faults of the play. The one really tragic part in the piece is that of Peleus, and he appears only in the middle, and owes the interest he excites, not to the fate of Andromache, but to the death of his grandson, who has no connexion with the drama. There could hardly be clearer proof than this of the poverty of dramatic motive in the play. It is morally revolting that the worthless Hermione should escape with her wickedness unpunished. Her cowardly vacillation from fear of her husband's anger cannot possibly be taken as expiating her guilt. She might at least have been made to meet her husband's body, and to confess herself his murderess;<sup>36</sup> but by that time she is far away and in safety.

Euripides was a perfect master of the art of appealing to the emotions of his audience, and he was particularly successful in inventing situations which should keep their sympathies on the rack and draw their tears. Most of his plays have a deeply emotional *finale*, with a sudden revulsion from happiness to sorrow. It is for this reason that Aristotle\* calls him the most tragic of the tragedians, and Quintilian marvels at his

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\* *Poet.* xiii.



power in depicting every phase of emotional feeling. He is always most powerful when evoking our sympathies. He also, like his predecessors, could make "pity and terror" take hold of men's hearts, but had not the same skill in leading on to a satisfactory conclusion by the purgation of those passions.

In the pieces which end tragically there is no calm or elevation ; and at the end of many of his tragedies he dismisses the audience with the sad reflexion, that "man cannot withstand stern Necessity", or that "the gods ordain for man much that he looks not for." This habit \* provoked much criticism ; and in other plays he attempted, by a happy issue, to obviate this want of harmony in the fates of his heroes. Even in this he was not, as a rule, very successful. The return to good fortune does not generally follow in natural sequence from the action of the play, but is the work of some outside power, the *deus ex machinâ*.<sup>37</sup>

He is the first writer to solve tragic destinies by means of a marriage ; and his marriages may be said with peculiar truth to be "made in heaven," for in most cases the gods are responsible for uniting the happy pair. Thus the Dioscuri unite Electra and Pylades in the *Electra* ; in the *Orestes* Apollo arranges a double wedding, Orestes with Hermione and Pylades with Electra. In the *Andromache* the heroine and Helenus

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\* Aristotle, *Poet.* xiii.



are coupled by Thetis. The lost *Antigone* of Euripides ended similarly with the betrothal of the heroine to Hæmon. In two other plays, the *Alcestis* and *Helena*, husbands have their wives restored to them. Thus tragedy was already approaching the spirit of the later comedy, and that not only in its *finale*, but also in the entire construction of the plot. At the same time the lyric element ceases in Euripides to be an organic part of the tragedy; indeed his choruses, pleasing and graceful as they are, and notable for the variety of their rhythms, are no longer an integral part of the action,\* but merely a superadded ornament. With the decline of the lyric element, tragedy again more nearly approaches the epic, as may be seen more particularly in the monologue prefaces and the long, continuous narratives of events which have happened off the stage. As a rule, the prefaces of Euripides stand in, at best, very loose connexion with the play, and are sometimes spoken by a character who has no part in the drama itself. They are purely narrative, and are intended to acquaint the audience with the chief characters of the piece and the events which precede the opening of the play, all which may better be left to be gathered in the course of the play itself, and generally can be so learnt in Euripides. Hence the prologue might easily be omitted, without essential injury to the construction of the plot.

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\* Aristotle, *Poet.* xviii.

The narratives of what has taken place off the stage, which are in most cases placed in the mouths of messengers, are often marked in Euripides by a prolixity and exactness of detail, which tends to destroy the impression of the whole. They often lack probability, and depend for their effect more upon the delivery than on the impressions of the contents. An example may be found by comparing the description of the captains in the *Women of Tyre* with that in the *Seven against Thebes* of Æschylus.

In the dialogue of Euripides, again, we have the same rhetorical mannerism, reminding us too much of the forensic and political oratory then dominant at Athens. Examples are found in the formal controversies which are debated between Peleus and Menelaus in the *Andromache*, between Helen and Hecuba in the *Troades*, between Agamemnon and Menelaus in the *Iphigenia at Aulis*. For this reason Quintilian advised young orators to read Euripides, seeing that his language was very like the oratorical style, and for attack and rejoinder he might be matched with any of those who had distinguished themselves as public speakers ; on which ground indeed he had been blamed by those who preferred, for its sublimity, the grave and truly tragic tone of Sophocles. Even in its external form the dialogue of Euripides reflects the character of his age. His language is an exact reproduction of the style of conversation used by the Athenians of the

time, with all its merits and defects ; its polished sparkle and transparent lucidity, its easy, gossiping diffuseness, its tinge of ironical raillery. His lyrics, again, are faithfully modelled on the favourite dithyrambs of the period. The want of true emotion is hidden by a showy and wordy expression of the feelings, which is seen particularly in the long laments of his much-suffering heroes. Euripides seems never to have realized that real suffering may be dumb, and that silence has often a greater effect on the audience than endless woe and wailing. He is not therefore misrepresented, when in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes (l. 940) he calls Æschylus a cheat for letting his Achilles or Niobe sit in silence without uttering a sound, and thereby cozening his audience, who wait in vain for Niobe to open her lips. He is very fond of "commatic" scenes and monodies,<sup>38</sup> and sometimes seeks, even at the expense of good taste, to surprise his audience by novelty or strangeness in musical composition. Thus in the *Orestes* he introduces a Phrygian eunuch, who sings a peculiar song to a Phrygian melody with an accompaniment of barbarous cries (*Orest.* 1385). His choral odes as a rule are only connected with the action of the play, in that they take some point in its development as the occasion to launch forth into unnecessary narratives and descriptions, or to interpolate moral platitudes which are calculated rather to distract the attention

of the audience than to assist their comprehension of its meaning. In the choruses of Euripides the profundity of thought which we find in Æschylus, and the penetration of feeling which characterizes Sophocles, are replaced by an easy flow of words and an abundance of graceful imagery. Euripides was less correct than his predecessors in his metrical and musical composition, and he is even careless in the versification of his dialogue.

During the first ten years of his career, Euripides found little recognition. Not that he allowed himself to be disturbed by this fact, or by the biting malice with which the comic poets, and Aristophanes especially, pursued him. Aristophanes had, as is proved by his famous criticism in the *Frogs*, a keen eye for the poet's faults ; but the persistent way in which he emphasizes them here and elsewhere only testifies to the growing reputation of the poet and his steadily increasing influence over his contemporaries. After the death of Pericles, the rising generation recognised him as the accredited exponent of their own ideas, and one from whom they had much to learn ; and thus at last he became the acknowledged favourite of the masses, in spite of all that might be said against him by the advocates of an older and better period in art and life. A certain aristocratic spirit, which breathes throughout Æschylus and Sophocles, imposed on the masses and kept them at a respectful distance. Euripides, on the

other hand, was a truly democratic poet,\* who came down to the people's level, and spoke their thoughts in a manner they could understand. Thus Aristophanes makes him say of himself (*Ranæ*, 954), that he had taught men to chatter, "to use subtle rules and well cut phrases, to reason, see, and understand, to trim, to love and to be cunning, to suspect and to contrive; . . . and all this while I introduced common things, familiar things of every day, thus inviting criticism; for all men were judges and could criticise."

The multitude looked with wonder on Æschylus and Sophocles; Euripides delighted them; and it is well known that after the defeat of Nicias in Sicily many of the Athenians owed their liberty to Euripides, having purchased it by their ability to sing or declaim his poetry (*Plut. v. Nic.*, cap. xxix.).†

The people of Abdera, in the time of Lysimachus, are said to have been roused to such a state of enthusiasm by a representation of the *Andromeda* given by the actor Archelaus, that they were all seized by a poetic fever, in which they sang and recited passages from the drama.‡

For the tragedians of later times Euripides was the absolute model and pattern, and equally so for the

\* See Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 952.

† This fact is finely used by Robert Browning in the framework of his transcript of the *Alcestis* in *Balaustion's Adventure*.

‡ Luc., *De conscr. hist.*, cap. i.

poets of the new comedy. Diphilus called him the "Golden Euripides," and Philemon went so far as to say, with some extravagance, "If the dead, as some assert, have really consciousness, then would I hang myself to see Euripides." He had great admirers in Alexander the Great and the Stoic Chrysippus, who quoted him regularly in several of his works. Among the Romans too he was held in high esteem. "Euripidi tu quantum credas, nescio," Quintus Cicero writes to his brother's learned freedman Tiro; "ego certe singulos eius versus singula testimonia puto."

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#### "HIPPOLYTUS."

Of the extant plays of Euripides, the *Hippolytus*, which took the first prize at its production in ol. 87, 4 (428 B.C.), deserves the highest place.

In the prologue, Aphrodite declares herself resolved to punish the chaste Hippolytus, son of Theseus, who disdains her and pays his worship to Artemis. With this design she has put into the heart of Phædra, the wife of Theseus, a love for her stepson. This Theseus will learn, and will then destroy his son by one of three fatal wishes which Poseidon has promised to fulfil. This will involve the ruin of Phædra too; but for that there is no help, the goddess caring first for her honour and herself. Presently Hippolytus enters; he lauds his lady Artemis, and consecrates to her a garland. An

attendant suggests that he should in like manner honour Aphrodite, whose statue also stands at the entrance to the palace. Hippolytus, deaf to advice, persists in ignoring the goddess, and therein lies his offence. When he has left the stage, the love-sick Phædra enters with her nurse. Her passion finds expression in the very first words she utters :

“Support me, raise up my head, maidens ; my limbs faint. Grasp my poor, pretty hands ! The fillet on my brow is heavy ; take it away. Let my hair fall on my shoulders. . . . Alas ! ah ! that I might drink a draught of clear water from the dewy spring ! that I might lie and rest beneath the poplars in the grassy meadow ! . . . Let me go to the mountains. I will seek to the wood and the pine trees, where the dogs of the chase hunt the flying deer. Ye gods ! I should love to call to the hounds, to hold in my hand the spear, and lift as high as my yellow hair the Thessalian javelin.”

With great difficulty she is brought to confess herself to the nurse, and declares to the chorus her resolve to die. Meantime, the nurse seeks to comfort her, and bids her give her love free course, rather than let herself be consumed by an inexpressible woe. She promises to aid her, but gives no details of her plan. Phædra anxiously enjoins her in no case to tell the truth to Hippolytus ; but she evades question, and hurries



away into the house where Hippolytus lives. The unhappy Phædra remains behind, but soon learns from the tumult within that the nurse has betrayed her secret, and that Hippolytus has received the disclosure with horror and dismay. He comes out with the nurse, and bursts into loud imprecations on the female sex. Phædra sees that the misplaced zeal of the nurse has ruined all ; she covers her with reproaches, and again resolves to die. Her resolution is instantly fulfilled. The servants are still running about in wild distraction, when Theseus enters on his return. He is told the unhappy news. He sees the corpse, and in the hand a letter which represents Hippolytus as the cause of the bloody deed ; at once there comes to his lips the fatal wish for his son's death. Then Hippolytus himself enters, and sees what has happened. From his father's mouth he receives at once a declaration of the suspicion resting on him, and a sentence of exile. It is useless to attempt to right himself, for he is too generous to tell his father the truth. Theseus mistakes his son's plain words for artful lies, and thus provokes the tragic retort, that, were he in his father's place, he should think nothing could expiate such crime but death. With an appeal to Artemis, he departs into exile. A choral ode intervenes, and then a messenger arrives with news of the grievous disaster which has overtaken him. Theseus listens with indifference, convinced that his son has but met due punishment for his deserts. He discovers his



error only when Artemis appears and explains why she was powerless to aid. Hippolytus is carried, dying, on to the stage. He parts from life without regret, reconciled to his father, and happy in the presence of his revered goddess. Theseus and the chorus stand round the body, resigning themselves to the divine will, which has shown its power in the recent events.

The poetic beauty of the whole play is truly remarkable. With what delicacy does the dramatist avoid all personal collision between Phædra and Hippolytus, all contact, even by word, between the two ; so that the hero shall preserve to the last the fresh charm of his modest youth ! How grand the scene of sorrow which fitly crowns the whole ! How touching the reflexion of the actors in it, that all the griefs and sorrows of mortal life have their source in that which apparently makes their highest happiness ! How tender is the delineation of the unhappy Phædra's unavailing struggle with her passion, and the shame with which she at length suffers the decisive word to pass her lips. But when she sees her love despised, and that naught but shame and humiliation await her, then even her love itself grows cold ; in despair she flies to death, and with design drags Hippolytus to a common doom. This action is psychologically correct, if we choose, with Euripides, to represent the capacity of women for this kind of dæmonic possession. Phædra, a victim to despair, acts without reflexion, and there-

fore instinctively. It is worth noticing how Euripides has been able with delicate discrimination to paint Phædra's fatal resolution in one short stroke. This is a point to which most modern readers would take objection, since they have a different conception of the sex, and would fail to discover here any adequate motive for the woman's conduct. Of one thing we may be sure, that any change of detail would be made at the expense of the inspired beauty of the poet's whole conception.

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“MEDEA.”

The *Medea* was produced in ol. 87, 1 (432-1 B.C.) in company with the *Philoctetes*, *Dictys*, and *Reapers* (*Θερισταί*), and obtained the third prize. It tells in an impressive manner the story of the jealousy and revenge of a woman betrayed by her husband. Medea has left home and father for Jason's sake, and he, after she has borne him children, forsakes her, and betroths himself to Glauké, the daughter of Creon, the ruler of Corinth.\* Creon orders her into banishment, that her jealousy may not lead her to do his child some injury. In vain she begs not to be cast forth, and finally asks for but one day's delay. This Creon grants, to the undoing of him

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\* She is not named in the play, and had doubtless no traditional name, being a character newly introduced by the dramatist. Later tradition calls her Glauké.

and his. Jason comes, and reproaches Medea with having provoked her sentence by her own violent temper. Had she had the sense to submit to sovereign power, she would never have been thrust away by him. In reply she reminds her husband of what she once had done for him : how for him she had betrayed her father and her people ; for his sake had caused Pelias, whom he feared, to be killed by his own daughters.

“I am the mother of your children. Whither can I fly, since all Greece hates the barbarian ?”

“It is not you,” answers Jason, “who once saved me, but love, and you have had from me more than you gave. I have brought you from a barbarous land to Greece, and in Greece you are esteemed for your wisdom. And without fame of what avail is treasure or even the gifts of the Muses ? Moreover it is not for love that I have promised to marry the princess, but to win wealth and power for myself and for my sons. Neither do I wish to send you away in need ; take as ample a provision as you like, and I will recommend you to the care of my friends.”

She refuses with scorn his base gifts, “Marry the maid if thou wilt ; perchance full soon thou mayest rue thy nuptials.”

Meantime Ægeus, the ruler of Athens, arrives at Corinth from Delphi. Medea laments her fate to him, and asks his aid ; he swears that in Athens she

shall find sure refuge. Now reassured, she turns to vengeance. She has Jason summoned, and when he comes she begs his forgiveness :

“Forgive what I said in anger ! I will yield to the decree, and only beg for one favour, that my children may stay. They shall take to the princess a costly robe and a golden crown, and pray for her protection.”

The prayer is granted, and the gifts accepted. But soon a messenger appears, announcing the result :

“Alas ! the bride has died in horrible agony ; for no sooner had she put on her Medea’s gifts than a devouring poison consumed her limbs as with fire, and in his endeavour to save his daughter the old father died too.”

Nor is her vengeance yet complete. She leads her two children to the house, and that no other may slay them in revenge, murders them herself. She is followed by Jason, who has come to punish the murderer of his bride. He then hears that his children have perished too, and Medea herself appears in the chariot of the sun, bestowed by Helios upon his descendants. She revels in the anguish of her faithless husband :

“I do not leave my children’s bodies with thee ; I take them with me, that I may bury them in Hera’s precinct. And for thee, who didst me all that evil, I prophesy an evil doom : by a piece of Argo shall thy head be broken.”

She flies to Ægeus at Athens, and the play closes with the chorus :

“Manifold are thy shapings, Providence !  
Many a hopeless matter gods arrange.  
What we expected never came to pass :  
What we did not expect gods brought to bear ;  
So have things gone, this whole experience through !”  
—R. BROWNING.

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It is certainly characteristic of the method of Euripides that this formula, with but slight variation, should also form the close of four other plays, the *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Bacchæ*, and *Helena*.<sup>39</sup> A modern critic justly remarks :

“Medea is a masterly presentment of passion in its secret plies and recesses. The suffering and sensitiveness of injured love is truly and strongly drawn with the utmost nicety of observation, passing from one stage to another, until it culminates in an awful deed of vengeance. The mighty enchantress and weak woman is powerfully delineated. The touches of motherly tenderness are in the highest degree pathetic. The strife of emotions which passion engenders is admirably shown ; and amid all the strife of their conflict, and amid all the sophistical and illusive commonplaces, which work upon the soul, hate and vengeance win the day. Medea is criminal, but not without cause, and not without strength and dignity. Such an inner world of emotion is alien from the genius of the religious and soldier-like

Æschylus ; Sophocles creates characters to act on one another, and endows them with qualities accordingly. Euripides opens out a new world to art, and gives us a nearer view of passionate emotion, both in its purest forms and in the wildest aberrations by which men are controlled, or troubled, or destroyed."

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### "THE BACCHÆ."

The *Bacchæ* is one of the finest of the plays of Euripides. It is an enthusiastic panegyric of the power of Dionysus, composed by the poet in his last years, during his sojourn at the court of Macedonia. It was produced at Athens for the first time after his death, like the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Alcmæon*. Bacchus re-enters Thebes, his native land, after many wanderings through all the countries of the earth, accompanied by a chorus of Bacchanalian women. The ancient Cadmus and the seer Tiresias recognise him as the god ; but Pentheus, ruler of Thebes, the grandson of Cadmus and son of Agave, with his mother and her sisters, deny his godhead, seeing in him but the son of a mortal.

"A frenzy," he laments, "has fallen upon the women of Thebes. They have left the city and rushed off to Mount Cithæron, frenzy-stricken by a youth with fair hair and a glance like that of Aphrodite. But

I will not permit this Bacchic madness, and the youth shall pay the forfeit with his life. Cadmus and Tiresias, your folly too I blame, that you, old as you are, should take the thyrsus, and, crowned with ivy, give yourselves up to such madness. Your age protects you; but for yonder youth, who has brought this new frenzy into my land, he shall feel my vengeance. Hasten, my men, to bring him hither!"

Vainly the seer exhorts him not to breed sorrow for his house; vainly Cadmus reminds him how Actæon fell, and suggests that, even if the stranger be no god, as Pentheus thinks, it would be wise to play the hypocrite and call him god, that the family may win the credit that would come to them had Semele borne a god for son.

Soon a servant leads in the god, disguised as one of his worshippers. He has allowed himself to be taken without fear or resistance, and confesses to the king that he has come to spread the new god's worship throughout Thebes. Pentheus bids them bind him and cast him into a cell. This is done; when, lo! the young god stands again among them, freed by his own power. The king, astonished, asks who set him free. "The god who made for mortal men the grape vine with its clustering fruit."

Here a messenger announces that three bands of women throng Mount Cithæron in Bacchanalian revel,

Autonoë, Ino, and Agāve (daughters of Cadmus) at their head. The king is about to collect in haste a band of soldiers to punish these wanton women. The god bids him use no force, and offers to bring the women to the presence of the king without any disturbance, if Pentheus will follow him in woman's dress; in that way he will be able to look on at the ritual of the women. Struck with infatuation, the king obeys. Presently comes a messenger with the news of the expedition :

“The stranger made Pentheus climb a lofty pine tree, and then from the heavens rang the voice of Dionysus, crying : ‘I bring you here one who scoffs at me and my orgies; punish him as ye will.’ They surrounded the place where Pentheus was hidden, pulled the tree down, and tore the king in pieces. His mother heard not the voice of her son, crying to her to have pity upon him and not slay her only child. She carries her son's head high on a thyrsus, taking it for the head of a lion; and soon will she be here in Thebes, giving praise to Bacchus for the success that has attended her hunting.”

Almost as he speaks she appears. Rejoicing in her victory, she calls on her father and on Pentheus, her son, to fasten “the lion's head” on the lintel of the palace as proof of her prowess. Cadmus approaches. Slaves enter, bearing the body of Pentheus, which they have found. Agave congratulates her father :



"You have begotten the bravest of all mortal women for your daughter. Look! see what a monster I have slain with my own hand! Ask all your friends to join the hunters' banquet."

"Oh, woe unspeakable!" sighs Cadmus. "Just, though hard, is the god's punishment of his creatures' sins."

Agave reproaches the old man with his peevish indifference to her triumph, and asks for Pentheus, that he may share her joy. Cadmus prays that she may never recover her senses; for, should she learn the truth, her anguish would be intolerable.

Agave asks the meaning of his words. Cadmus bids her gaze on the lion's head, and she recognises the features of her son. Now she knows that she has murdered him; that Bacchus, whose godhead she denied, has thus chastised her. The god appears, and tells them what yet awaits them. Agave must leave her native land, and Cadmus, after being changed into a snake, shall reach at last the country of the blest.

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The fact that the tragic element in the *Bacchæ* is not so striking as in the *Medea* or *Hippolytus* is due to the subject of the play. We are here concerned, not with simply human affairs, but with the awe-inspiring power of an outraged deity, or, in other words, with a portion of the ancient mythology full of religious significance. The poet introduces the god in

human form, and yet succeeds in not giving any offence by his anthropomorphic treatment. How beautiful is his clemency to the obstinate king! and how earnestly he tries to the end to bring him to a better mind and induce him to be wise! It almost reconciles our minds to Pentheus' cruel fate. The entire play is instinct with a wild, bacchantic exultation. The god is revealed to us in all his awful majesty, the despot of those whom he rules. The description of the riot of the Bacchantes on Cithæron (ll. 677, etc.) is most brilliant, and the messenger's narrative of the tragic end of Pentheus a perfect masterpiece. The close of the tragedy is less pleasing. But we are hardly in a position to pass a verdict on this part, as much of it is lost; indeed, the whole play in general, from its very popularity, is exceedingly corrupt.\*

Much may be objected to in the character of Pentheus. His obstinate opposition to the god Dionysus seems to lack an adequately lofty motive. The position he assumes seems to be merely the result of some royal caprice. It is also unsatisfactory that he is suffered to go to his doom while he is still unconscious of his crime. Although, at the beginning of the play,

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\* In the time of Didymus there existed a collection of twenty-one Euripidean plays. After that at a later period—to which our *scholia* belong—there was only a selection of nine. Even this seemed too large a number to the later Byzantines, who contented themselves with three, the *Hecuba*, *Orestes*, and *Phænissæ*.

Cadmus, Tiresias, and the chorus make it a reproach to him that he opposes with a shallow philosophy the traditions of his forefathers, yet, strangely enough, his final downfall is due to opposition to the introduction of a religious novelty. The *Bacchæ* will always be an important play, for the evidence it gives of the poet's development. It is his palinode, the recantation of the sceptical views he formerly entertained. For in it "he resolutely opposes the sophistic faction of atheism and reason (τὸ σοφόν); in its place he holds and enforces a quiet, unswerving belief in some unseen ordering of the world, which, and not any human knowledge, is the basis of all religious faith and worship. As he looks back at the close of his journey, and counts what he has gained, what has proved stable and what fleeting, Euripides teaches two lessons to the wavering combatant in the stern fight against scepticism, the lessons of modesty and renunciation, taught with the shortness of life full in view and all its dark problems before him. To the righteous spirit that resigns itself to the divine will he promises peace and, in the future, knowledge." (Bernhardy.)

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"THE PHŒNISSÆ."

The subject of the *Phænissæ* is the war of the Seven against Thebes. The Argive host has invested the town, and from the terrace of the palace an old man,

who has had the care of Œdipus' children, points out to Antigone the enemy's lines, their leaders, and among them her brother Polynices, to whom "she would fain fly through the air and clasp him in her arms." The servant bids her go in, for strangers (the chorus of Phœnician women) are approaching. To them enters Polynices, who has slipped in through the gate. They call Jocasta, his mother. She is delighted to see her son, and gently chides him for the brothers' quarrel. He describes to her the miseries of banishment, "which have induced him to invade Thebes with the army of Adrastus, in order to recover the kingdom that belongs to him. But it is with reluctance that he has taken arms against his kin, and he hopes now to reconcile himself with his brother, and put an end to the troubles and trials of their house."

Eteocles appears, and spurns his brother roughly and contemptuously away. Let them meet before the gates; then let the whole house fall in ruin! Polynices having departed, Eteocles arranges with Creon to post a captain at each gate of Thebes.

"I will myself oppose my brother's sword. Should fortune prove faithless to me, let thy son Hæmon wed Antigone; if Polynices fall, his body must not find a grave; whoever gives him one must die. And now send thy son Menœceus to Tiresias the seer, that he may come and read the fate of Thebes."

Eteocles hurries off to battle. Tiresias is brought in by Menœceus, and announces that Thebes cannot be saved unless Menœceus dies. His father bids him fly, ere the townsmen hear the prophecy. He however is ready to die, and hides from his father his determination. A messenger tells Jocasta the news of the victory won, after Creon's son had sacrificed himself for his country.

“At Thebes’ seven gates they stood, the seven captains. Long time the victory was undecided, when the bolt of Zeus felled to the earth Capaneus, the blasphemer, just as he was about to scale the walls. And now the Thebans have broken through the ranks of the foe, and the city is saved. But the brothers are preparing to decide their differences in single fight.”

Jocasta calls Antigone, that together they may hasten to the camp; they will fall at the feet of the two brothers, and pray them to leave the battle; if they will die, their mother's life shall end with theirs. Creon enters, lamenting his son's death. He asks for Jocasta, and hears how she has gone forth to stop the combat of her sons. A messenger announces the death of the mother and the brothers. The three bodies are brought in, accompanied by Antigone. The blind Œdipus hears his daughter's cry of agony; he appears, and

father and daughter lament together. Creon bids them be silent, and proclaims his will.

“Antigone shall become the wife of my son Hæmon ; thou, Œdipus, must leave the land ; so long as thou dwellest in Thebes, it goes ill with the city. Let Polynices’ body remain unburied.”

Œdipus and his daughter entreat in vain. Antigone scorns the marriage ; she determines to offer funeral honours to her brother, and with her father to wander towards Colonus, where Apollo has promised him surcease of his woes in death.

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Of the *Supplices* (p. 242) and *Alcestis* (p. 244) we have already said all that is necessary.

In the *Hercules Furens* (*Madness of Heracles*), which has already been mentioned (p. 239), the hero first rescues his family from the death designed for them by the tyrant Lycus. Afterwards, in the mad delirium sent on him by Hera through the ministration of Iris, he murders his wife Megara and his children, thinking that he is revenging himself on his enemies. When his madness passes, he sees the impious thing that he has done, and fain would put himself to death ; but at Theseus’ bidding he follows him to Athens.<sup>40</sup>

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## "THE HERACLIDÆ."

The *Heraclidæ* was probably produced in ol. 89 (424 B.C.). It praises Athens as a refuge for fugitives, and predicts her victory over the unjust Argives, not without reference to the struggle then going on between Athens and the Peloponnese. The children of Heracles, under the leadership of Iolaus, his nephew, and Alcmene, fly from the persecution of Eurystheus to the sanctuary of Marathon in Attica. Eurystheus' herald Copreus demands their surrender, but this is refused by Demophon, king of Athens. Eurystheus advances with an army against the town, and the king prepares for battle. The oracle demands as price of victory the sacrifice of a virgin; and Macaria, the heroic daughter of Heracles, of her own free will prepares for death. The battle begins: the aged Iolaus, to whom Hebe has given youth for a day, rushes into the fight, and captures his enemy Eurystheus. He is led away in fetters. The citizens of Athens wish to save him; but Alcmene presses for his death. Eurystheus resigns himself to his fate, but prophesies to the Athenians, who did not desire his death, that his grave shall be of great aid to them when the descendants of the Heraclidæ, unmindful of the favours which their forefathers received at their hands, use violence towards their state.

The *Heraclidæ* is a play of extremely simple construction, epic rather than dramatic in its nature. The

action is not developed, but merely broken and protracted into scenes. It should be looked upon as a political pamphlet. The words of Macaria as she passes to her doom are very characteristic of the poet :

“May there be naught beyond the grave! For if there remain cares for us poor mortals even when we die, I know not whither we may turn for refuge. Now death is held the chiefest cure for evil.”

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“ION.”<sup>41</sup>

The *Ion* also belongs to the more successful plays of Euripides. It is remarkable for the vigour of its dramatic composition, for the clever handling of the plot and its no less clever solution, and for the admirable treatment of the not very elevated character of Creusa, and of her grief when she believes herself abandoned and betrayed by the god, who had bereft her of her virginity. There are however in many places marks of weakness in the composition, standing out from what is in general work of high excellence. The story was probably invented by Euripides himself. Creusa, daughter of Erechtheus, king of Athens, secretly bears a son to Apollo; and fearful of her parents' anger, she exposes the child in the cave in which she had met the god. Here she imagines he has been torn in pieces by wild beasts; but in reality Hermes has, at Apollo's command, carried him, with the marks of identification given



him by his mother, to the temple at Delphi. There he is brought up by the Pythian priestess, and being now a youth occupies himself with the care and cleansing of the sanctuary. Meantime Creusa had been married by her father to Xuthus, an Achæan captain, who had assisted the Athenians in their expedition against Chalcis in Eubœa. On the death of Erechtheus Xuthus becomes ruler of Athens; but his marriage with Creusa remains childless, and they betake themselves together to Delphi, to ask the god to bless their union with children. Xuthus, consulting the god alone, receives a favourable answer. He is to consider as his son the first person he meets as he leaves the sanctuary. This proves to be Ion. Xuthus accepts him as his son, and directs him, after offering a thanksgiving sacrifice and entertaining his friends, to accompany him to Athens, where his true character is to be for a time concealed out of consideration for Creusa. When she hears from the chorus that children are still denied her, but that she is to receive into her house as son a youth, whom she immediately concludes to be the offspring of some lawless connexion of her husband, she despairs of justice from the god. He has basely forgotten his own son; and therefore she resolves, on the advice of an old servant, tutor of Erechtheus her father, to slay this boy. The servant attempts to poison him; but the execution of the plan is frustrated, and Creusa condemned to death as a murderess by the people of

Delphi. She flies for protection to the altar of the god, from which Ion is about to drag her when the prophetess of Apollo intervenes. The prophetess gives him, as he has failed to find a father, the proofs of identity which may help him to find his mother. The recognition between mother and son immediately takes place. As Ion refuses to believe himself the son of the god Apollo, Athena appears, and, confirming the words of Creusa, promises Ion a happy and brilliant future at Athens. She expressly bids them let Xuthus remain in ignorance of the truth.

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## THE TROJAN CYCLE.

### "IPHIGENIA AT AULIS."

Fully one half of the extant plays of Euripides belong to the Trojan cycle of legends.

The subject of the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, which with the *Alcmæon* and *Bacchæ* was produced at Athens by his son after the poet's death, is the sacrifice of the noble princess. The seer Calchas informs the Achæan host, then lying wind-bound in the harbour at Aulis, that Artemis requires the sacrifice of a maiden as price of a favourable voyage. Agamemnon offers his own daughter, summoning her to the camp under pretext of marrying her to Achilles. He quickly repents his resolve, and sends a letter by a faithful slave to My-

cenæ, bidding her not leave her home. Menelaus however intercepts the letter, and takes it from the slave, so that Iphigenia arrives with her mother Clytæmnestra and her little brother Orestes. Their coming fills the king with the deepest anxiety ; he vainly tries to induce his wife to return at once, but she will not renounce her right of conducting her daughter to the bridegroom. Achilles makes his way to Agamemnon's tent. No longer can he hold in check the impatience of his Myrmidons. The queen meets him and greets him as her son-in-law ; but Achilles, knowing nothing of the marriage project, thinks she is jesting with him. An aged servant approaches and reveals the terrible secret, "Thy daughter was summoned hither, that thy lord with his own hand might offer her in sacrifice." On her knees the unhappy mother prays the hero to save her daughter, who has been brought as his bride to her death ; he promises to protect her with his warriors. Agamemnon enters from his tent :

"Dear wife, let now our daughter come, that I her sire may lead her to the wedding-sacrifice."

Clytæmnestra calls the maiden, who comes weeping with Orestes. "Slay not my child," prays the mother. The young maiden clasps her father's knees, and begs him not to slay her in the bloom of youth.

"I was the first to call thee father, the first to climb

upon thy knee to kiss thee and be kissed. I hoped some day in my own house to requite thee, my father, when thou wert old, for thy care of me. In the name of thy forefathers, for the sake of the mother who bare me in pain, whose pangs are renewed to-day, I beseech thee, slay me not ! See, my brother kneels too and weeps, and lifts his little hands in prayer to thee. There is nothing sweeter than to look upon the light of the sun ; no one desires to go into the darkness. Only a madman asks for death. It is better to live despised than to die in honour."

But Agamemnon answers that it must be ; horrible though the deed appear, it must be :

"All Greece demands the maiden's death, for only on that condition shall the city of Priam fall, and the Argive wives be protected from the ravisher !"

He leaves the weeping women, and Achilles returns with the news that his efforts to save the maiden have been unavailing, that the army in its anger tried to stone him, and that his own Myrmidons were the first to rise against him. But, he says, she shall not die while his arm can save her.

The maiden gratefully refuses ; man must not think to do the impossible ; she is herself resolved to die.

"All Greece, great Greece, now looks to me ; I alone can give a passage to the ships and bring destruction

upon Troy, and by my deed shall all women yet unborn be saved from barbarian robbers, when the Greeks have avenged the ruin wrought by Paris through the seduction of Helen. All this shall I accomplish by my death, and I shall win the happy praise of a deliverer. Then too I have no right to care overmuch for my life; thou didst bear me for all Greece, not for thyself only. Here are thousands of warriors armed with spears, thousands of rowers, ready when their country has suffered wrong to dare for her and die for Greece; and shall my poor life stay all this? Where is the justice? . . . I give myself for Greece. Sacrifice me, and lay Troy waste. This shall be my memorial through years to come, this shall be in the place of children and marriage, this shall be my fame. It is right that the Greeks rule the barbarians, not they the Greek; for the barbarians are slaves, but the Greek is free."

Achilles follows in admiration, and so also her mother, her heart consumed with silent grief, and revenge in her thoughts. Bidding farewell to them and to the light of the sun, the heroic maiden is led to the altar of the goddess. This powerful and highly pathetic scene is followed by a dreary narrative of the maiden's miraculous rescue by the goddess Artemis.

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“THE WOMEN OF TROY.”

The scene of the *Women of Troy* is laid immediately after the fall of Troy. Athena and Poseidon resolve to scatter the Greek fleet. The herald Talthybius brings a message to Hecuba :

“Just now have the lots for the prisoners been cast ; Cassandra is given to Agamemnon, Polyxena is assigned as an offering to the spirit of Achilles ; Andromache, Hector’s wife, falls to Neoptolemus ; thyself, Hecuba, art given to Odysseus.”

The herald bids them bring Cassandra to be led to the king. She appears habited as a king’s bride, and singing in prophetic trance the hymn of Hymen :

“A marriage more disastrous than Helen’s shall be mine with the glorious Agamemnon, ruler of the Grecian host. For I shall slay him and lay waste his house, and so requite the destroying of my father and my brothers. But let that be ; I will not sing of the axe which shall fall upon my neck, yea, and upon another’s, nor of the strife for a mother’s life which shall come of my marrying. This city of ours is happier than the Achæans, for the Trojans fell for their country and rest in their native soil. Therefore dry thy tears, my mother ; my marriage brings destruction upon our foes.”

And as the herald leads her to the ship, and bids

Hecuba follow her future master, Odysseus, the prophetess foretells for him long wanderings, full of danger, before at last he shall reach his home. To her mother her farewell is for ever :

“Soon shall I dwell with my father and my brothers, when I reach in triumph the land of shadows, after destroying the house of Atreus.”

Hecuba is lamenting with the band of Trojan captives, when Andromache rushes in with her child, loudly crying that they are taking her to slavery. Polyxena, she says, has just been offered at the tomb of Achilles :

“Would that her fate were mine, since 'tis better far to die than live !”

Hecuba comforts her :

“Submit thyself to thy fate, and live for thy son, for he perchance may some day build a second Troy.”

Talthybius returns and demands the child, whom, at Odysseus' bidding, the Greeks intend to hurl from the battlements of Troy. It is torn away from its mother's trembling arms, and she is delivered to her new lord. Hecuba and the chorus of women make new lament. Menelaus enters, resolved that Helen shall be taken home and put to death. Hecuba bids him avoid Helen's eyes, lest they beguile him of his purpose. Helen appears, and seeks once more to ensnare her husband in the meshes of love ; but Hecuba unmasks



her wiles, and Menelaus orders that she be taken to the ship out of his sight. The herald returns with the mangled body of Andromache's child, relating the hasty departure of Andromache and her last request, that her child might find a grave. Hecuba asks the chorus to aid her in the task, and they raise the dirge in unison. Troy bursts into flames. The host is already prepared to leave, and the herald bids Hecuba follow him to Odysseus. The unhappy women betake themselves to the Achæan ships, bewailing the downfall of their native town.

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“HECUBA.”

The *Hecuba* shows us the aged queen and mother in all her sorrow. Her daughter, Polyxena, is carried away to die, a sacrifice on Achilles' tomb; and the body of her son, Polydorus, basely murdered for his treasure by his host, Polymestor, has been cast up on to the beach by the waves and found by Hecuba's companions. Polymestor comes to the Greek camp with his children. Hecuba entices him into her tent, murders his children, and puts out his eyes. He foretells her coming doom :

“Thou shalt fall into the sea from thy ship (so a Thracian seer has told me), shalt be changed into a dog, and shalt be henceforth a sign to mariners.”

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## "HELEN."

Of the *Andromache* we have already spoken. In his *Helen* the poet follows the legend that Paris did not carry off the real Helen, but only (by a device of Hera, avenging the contempt of her beauty in the judgment of Paris) a phantom form resembling the fair wife of Menelaus. Hermes had brought the real Helen to king Proteus in Egypt, who was to take care of her for Menelaus. After the death of Proteus, his son Theoclymenus desired her in marriage; but she remained true to her first husband, and fled to the grave of Proteus. There she meets Teucer, who has been driven from his father's house for not bringing Ajax home alive from Troy. He tells her of the fall of Troy, and that Menelaus had not yet returned home with his wife. After they have left, Menelaus comes to the same spot; he has landed there after many wanderings. He makes for the king's palace; but an old woman bars his entrance, telling him that no Hellene may set foot there. He has come, as he learns from her, to Egypt, and to the palace of Proteus, where now rules Theoclymenus, his son, who has a horror of all Greeks, being enamoured of Helen. She came there from Sparta long ago, before the Achæans went against Troy. Menelaus cannot solve the riddle; for he is himself taking home the phantom Helen from Troy. He determines to await the king. Helen enters

from the palace, accompanied by the king's sister, Theonoe, who has informed her of her husband's approaching visit. She observes some strangers, and tries in terror to escape, but Menelaus reassures her. They recognise each other. Menelaus still doubts whether it is really his wife, when a messenger informs him that the Helen he had brought from Troy had flown like a spirit away into the sky. Menelaus is now convinced ; but his wife is still in the tyrant's power. Theonoe appears and promises her help. The crafty Helen unfolds a plan of escape. Theoclymenus returns from the chase, and Helen tells him, with tears, that she has just heard from an Achæan of the death of her husband, Menelaus. He died by drowning, and his body has just been brought to the shore by some sailors. She will prepare it, she says, for burial according to the Greek rites, and taking it out in a boat, will consign it to the depths of the sea.

Menelaus appears, disguised as a sailor, to take Helen away, and bids her bring to the ship whatever is necessary for the burial. This is done, and soon after a messenger brings the news of Helen's treachery, and her flight with her husband Menelaus. Theoclymenus threatens to take vengeance on his sister, for having known of the arrival of Menelaus and not revealed it. Lastly the Dioscuri appear and reconcile him to her : "There is no fault in her ; it is the will of fate."

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## "ELECTRA."

In the *Electra*, as in the play of Sophocles, the sorrowing maiden is the chief character. But her emotions are stirred not so much by grief at her father's shameful death and her brother's fate as at the disgrace of poverty and her *mésalliance* with a poor but honest countryman. This countryman has treated the person of the royal maid with all respect. Orestes arrives with his friend Pylades ; he is recognised by an old retainer and reveals himself to his sister. A plan is arranged for slaying their mother and Ægisthus. Ægisthus is slain at a sacrifice to which he had hospitably asked the strangers. Electra decoys her mother into her house by pretending that she has borne a child, and that her mother must perform the proper sacrifices. Clytæmnestra is not the unsexed woman of the other tragedians, but a penitent, who regrets what has been done, and bears herself kindly towards her daughter. After the deed is done, brother and sister are seized with remorse. Electra laments that no one now will take her to wife ; Orestes, that all will mark him as a matricide. The Dioscuri then appear, and violently cut the entanglements of the plot.

"All that has happened is as it should be," they say, "for such is the will of Zeus and the Fates. Electra is to marry Pylades, and Orestes is to leave Argos.

The dread Erinyes will pursue him till he clasps the image of Pallas Athena at Athens and is acquitted by the judges of the Court of the Areopagus. The body of Ægisthus shall be buried by the citizens of Argos, but Clytæmnestra shall receive the last offices from Menelaus and Helen on their arrival in Greece from Egypt. Then happiness once again shall succeed to misery."

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Of all the plays of Euripides there is no better example of the poet's artistic manner than the *Electra*. Schlegel compares it in a rough but striking way to a domestic drama, as the term is used at the present day. If it had but ended with the betrothal of Pylades, and the payment of a sum down to the countryman for his consent, then the audience would have received the play as a comedy pure and simple. It is worth while to note the ridicule which the poet casts on the recognition scene between Orestes and Electra as conceived by Æschylus and Sophocles. In Euripides Agamemnon's old retainer (he who had rescued Orestes from his mother) sees at the grave of his much regretted king signs of a newly offered sacrifice and tresses of fair hair fresh severed. He concludes that Orestes has secretly returned to Argos, and has paid his first visit to his father's grave. He then shows Electra the tresses he has found, and says :

"Look at this lock, and set it beside thine own ; see

whether the colour is not the same. Often it happens that children of the same father show many strong physical likenesses.

“*Electra*. Old man, thy suggestion is not worthy of wisdom, that my bold brother should come thus secretly to the land in fear of Ægisthus. Then too, how should his hair be like mine? His hair has been treated as beseems one trained in the wrestling school, mine combed as a woman is wont. It were useless to compare them. Many men have hair like in colour, even if they be not kin.

“*Retainer*. Do thou but set thy foot upon the print of his, and see whether the shape is not alike, my daughter.

“*Electra*. How should there be a footprint upon the solid rock? And if there were, how should the prints of brother and sister be alike, seeing that the man’s is larger?

“*Retainer*. And if thy brother came to this land, is there no point by which thou wouldest know the work of thy own weaving, which he wore when I sent him secretly away to save his life?

“*Electra*. Dost thou not remember that I was a child when Orestes went away? And even if I did weave garments then, how could he now wear the robes he wore as a babe, unless the garment grew with his growth?”

Similar criticisms are found elsewhere.

When Orestes actually enters, he is recognised by the old retainer by his general likeness to Agamemnon, and in particular by a mark over his eye, which he received from a fall in childhood.

To us the *Electra* is but a "monument of decadence in taste and art." But after the unhappy catastrophe at Ægospotami the Athenians owed to it the very existence of their city. Plutarch \* tells us that in Lysander's council of war it had been loudly urged that the city should be razed to the ground. At an officers' banquet which shortly followed a Phocian recited the parade from the *Electra*, and moved his audience so much that they pronounced it sacrilegious to destroy a city so glorious and mother of such men.

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"ORESTES."

The *Orestes*, produced ol. 93 (408 B.C.), is, like the *Alcestis*, as the ancient world noticed, more nearly related to the satyric drama than to tragedy proper. The poet shows us the matricide Orestes smitten with madness. His fury has just left him, and he has sunk into a deep sleep. Electra nurses her sleeping brother. Helen has arrived at Argos with Menelaus, and asks Electra to offer for her the libations at the grave of her sister Clytæmnestra; for she fears the Argives, who hate her for the Trojan War. Electra too is unwilling

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\* *Vita Lys.*, cap. xv.

to approach her mother's grave, and at her advice Helen sends her daughter Hermione.

Orestes awakes, and is told by Electra of the arrival of Menelaus. Again his madness seizes him. Menelaus comes to him, and learns how the Furies have haunted him since his mother's funeral, and how the citizens of Argos refused him his father's sceptre, and purpose to stone him to death. He begs for Menelaus' help. Next comes Tyndareus, Clytæmnestra's father, and reproaches Orestes with his daughter's death. He tries to palliate his deed ; but Menelaus is too much afraid of an Argive war to lend any assistance.

Pylades announces to the outcast that the citizens have just met in council. The friends decide to attend themselves; for Orestes must plead his own cause, since Menelaus may betray them and the Argive sentries prevent their flight. Electra is still looking for Orestes, when a messenger tells her that the people have condemned to death both him and her. Orestes indeed defended his act ; but the only grace allowed him is that this very day he shall, with his own hand, slay his sister, and then himself. Orestes and Pylades enter, and brother and sister lament their fate. Before his death Orestes will have vengeance on the coward Menelaus ; and Pylades counsels him, as the best way of punishing the husband, to take the life of Helen. Electra advises them also to seize Hermione, who still tarries at Clytæmnestra's grave, as a hostage for their



safety; "for if the father sees thy sword at his daughter's throat, soon will he yield us our lives."

The murder is accomplished.<sup>42</sup> Hermione returns, and hears the wailing in the house. Electra tells her that Orestes is begging Helen to save his life and Electra's, and entreats Hermione to go in and aid the prayer. As the noble maid consents, Orestes comes out and seizes her. A Phrygian slave of Helen enters mourning and sings a dirge. Meantime Menelaus has discovered the murder of his wife. He comes with a following to punish the criminal, when he finds his daughter in the murderer's grasp! He resolves to save her, yet not to leave the murder unavenged. Suddenly Apollo appears, and says that Helen lives; for he has himself saved her from the fatal blow, and carried her off to Zeus, with whom she will abide in honour beside her brethren the Dioscuri. Orestes is to dwell in the Parrhasian land for the space of a year, and then, cleansed in Athens from the stain of his mother's blood, he shall wed Hermione. Electra is to marry Pylades, and then happiness awaits the whole family, for, while Menelaus reigns in Sparta, Orestes shall bear rule at Argos.

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"IPHIGENIA AMONG THE TAURI."

In the *Iphigenia among the Tauri* Orestes and Iphigenia are re-united. The maiden was rescued from the sacrifice by the goddess Artemis and carried to the land of the Tauri (Crimea). There the king, Thoas, has



made her priestess of Artemis, to whom it is her duty to sacrifice any one who comes to the land from Greece. The priestess enters from the temple; she has been terrified by a dream. She thinks it caused by her brother's death, and determines to pour funeral libations in his honour.

Just then Orestes and Pylades have landed on the shore. Orestes had come, at Apollo's command, to steal and carry to Athens the figure of the goddess, which, as the story was, had fallen from heaven into her temple. They determine to hide till nightfall in a cavern, and then to creep into the shrine and carry off the image.

Iphigenia is bewailing her brother's death with her handmaids, when a herdsman announces the advent of two Greek strangers; one "is called Pylades, the other, whose name is not known, was seized with an attack of frenzy at the sight of the herds, which he took for pursuing fiends." When the shepherds saw their cattle being killed, they armed themselves with stones, and after a long struggle overcame the strangers, and took them to the king. The king bids the priestess offer them forthwith in sacrifice to the goddess.

The strangers are brought. The maiden has their fetters removed and makes all ready for the sacrifice. She questions them, and finds that they are Greeks. She proposes to send one with a letter to her kinsmen; \*

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\* All the tragedians assume without reflexion that the art of

the other must be offered to the goddess. There is a generous rivalry between the friends, each wishing to save the other's life. At last Pylades consents to return. The maiden enters with the letter, and also herself tells its contents to the stranger, that, if her letter be lost, he may communicate her wishes to her friends. He must tell Orestes the son of Agamemnon that his sister Iphigenia is alive; she prays him to take her home from the barbarian land, and to rescue her from the service of the goddess, which compels her to offer strangers in sacrifice. Then Orestes reveals himself as her brother, and tells her of the dread fate of the house of Atreus and his own unhappy lot. Brother and sister form a plan of escape.

Thoas enters and asks if the sacrifice has been already performed. She did not dare, replies Iphigenia, to sacrifice the strangers; she must first cleanse them in the sea from the pollution of matricide, and afterwards touch them with the image of the goddess. Therefore let him send her with them both to the sea, and await their return in the temple. Thoas grants the request of the priestess.

Presently a messenger informs him of the flight of the maiden and the strangers in the Greek ship.<sup>43</sup> The king determines to follow them. Then Athena

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writing was known in heroic times, and even as early as the age of Heracles and Theseus.

appears, and bids him cease his pursuit; for Orestes came by Apollo's behest to take away his sister and the image of the goddess, on which condition he was to be freed at Athens from the haunting Furies. Thoas submits himself to her wish.

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“THE CYCLOPS.”

The *Cyclops* of Euripides is worthy of especial attention, as the only satyric drama that has come down to us from the ancient world.\* Euripides, it is true, may, for all we know, differ as widely from his predecessors in his treatment of the satyric drama, as he does in tragedy proper. The poet takes his story from the *Odyssey* ix. 105–542; Silenus and the chorus of satyrs are his own creation, and a change in the catastrophe

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\* The *Prolegg. Schol. Aristoph.*, p. xix., Duebn., gives a sketch, though an imperfect one, of a second Euripidean satyric play, entitled (conjecturally) *Syleus*. Heracles is sold to Syleus as a slave in the fields, and is sent to dig the vineyard. There he pulls up the vines by the roots, and carries them on his shoulders into his master's house. Then he bakes immense loaves of bread, slays the strongest of the oxen, forces the wine cellar, opens the lid of the finest cask, turns up the cellar door to make a table, and then makes merry with drink and song. When the proprietor enters, Heracles bids him with a stern look bring fruit and cakes. Finally he turns a great river into the yard, and floods everything with water.

According to Apollod. ii. 6, 3, Syleus is a man living in Aulis, who compels all passers by to work in his vineyard. Heracles digs up his vines by the roots, and kills Syleus and his daughter Xenodice. According to Diod. iv. 31, Syleus lives in the neighbourhood of Omphale, queen of Lydia.

was rendered necessary by the dramatizing of the story. We do not know the date at which the *Cyclops* was written. Some conjecture, on the strength of a supposed reference in l. 240 to the punishment of the prisoners in the stone quarries, that the piece was produced shortly after the disastrous Sicilian expedition under Nicias and Demosthenes in ol. 91, 4 (413 B.C.). But such a conjecture rests on the weakest possible evidence.\* The scene of the play is laid among the wild and imposing Sicilian mountain crags, with their accompaniments of rocks and cliffs and caves. The background—usually occupied in tragedy by a king's palace—represents the cave of the Cyclops. On one side we have a view of the sea; on the other a wide, open landscape, with Etna in the distance. The proscenium represents a meadow in front of the cave. The satyrs are dressed in goatskins as herdsmen of Polyphemus.

Silenus opens the play, saying how much he has suffered for Bacchus' sake as the comrade in many a journey and adventure. When Hera sent pirates, Tyrrhenians, to carry him away, Silenus took ship and followed in pursuit with all his children. A storm

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\* Silenus tells the Cyclops that the strangers threaten to bind him, to hurl him on to the benches of their ship, and to sell him to somebody to quarry stones, or to put him into a mill-house; ἀποδώσειν τινὶ πέτρους μοχλεύειν, ἢ ἐς μολῶνα καταβαλεῖν; but the allusion is probably only to the hardships of slavery in general.

drove them to the rocky coast near Etna, where dwell the Cyclops, eaters of men. One of them, by name Polyphemus, has made the satyrs his servants. The others tend the flocks; Silenus himself serves him within the cave.

Then the satyrs come home driving the flocks before them, and complaining of their unhappy lot, far from Bacchus, far from Aphrodite, serving their one-eyed master.

Silenus bids them be silent, for he sees a Greek ship on the beach. The sailors now approach with their leader, carrying empty baskets and water-bottles. Odysseus enters with his men, and asks for a spring, where they may quench their thirst. He is astonished to see the Bacchic chorus, and imagines he must have reached some town belonging to the Bromian god. He greets the old man, telling him his name and country, and learns that here the Cyclops live, a wild race of men, who relish nothing better than strangers' flesh; just now their lord is hunting in the forests of Etna. Odysseus asks them to supply him with food, for which, instead of gold, he will pay with the sweet wine of Bacchus. He gives Silenus some wine to taste, and Silenus feels its fire running to his finger tips:

"For one such draught, I would give you all the Cyclops' herds; a man must be mad not to rejoice in this wine; nay, I will worship it. Curse the stupid old Cyclops and his one eye!"

Silenus hastens to the cave to fetch meat, milk, and cheese. Meanwhile the chorus ask for news of Helen's fate and the fall of Troy. "Priam's city is destroyed and Helen taken," the hero tells them.

"That is well," rejoin the chorus.

"She was bewitched to see  
The many-coloured anklets and the chain  
Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris ;  
And so she left that good man Menelaus.  
There should be no more women in the world  
But such as are reserved for me alone."

Silenus enters from the cave with the provisions. He advises Odysseus to hand him the wine and quickly leave. The hero obeys, but sees the Cyclops in the distance. He knows not what to do or whither to turn. The old man bids him fly into the cave.

"*Odysseus.* 'Twere perilous to fly into the net.

*Silenus.* The cavern has recesses numberless ;  
Hide yourselves quick.

*Odysseus.* That will I never do.  
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced  
If I should fly one man. How many times  
Have I withstood with shield immovable  
Ten thousand Phrygians ! If I needs must die,  
Yet will I die with glory ; if I live,  
The praise which I have gained will yet remain."

The Cyclops comes, and marvels to see his servants idling ; and on his way to the cave he notices the strangers, the tied up sheep, the baskets full of cheese, and then the fiery red face of Silenus ; and Silenus com-

plains that he had been beaten by these strangers, to whom he points, because he had tried to defend his master's property. In vain did he tell them that the Cyclops was a god, sprung of the race of heaven ;

“They bore away your goods  
And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,  
And carried out the lambs ; and said, moreover,  
They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,  
And pull your vitals through the navel out,  
Torture your back with stripes ; then binding you,  
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,  
And then deliver you, a slave, to move  
Enormous rocks, or labour in a mill.”

The Cyclops in anger orders a knife to be sharpened and a fire lighted.

“Then will I slaughter thee and eat thee up.  
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game ;  
Of stags and lions have I gorged enough,  
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.”

In vain Odysseus begs for a hearing, saying that he only came in search of food, and had bought it of Silenus, who now denies the transaction, because his master has caught him in the act of cheating. Silenus swears a solemn oath that he has told the truth ; and the chorus give him the lie. But Polyphemus believes Silenus. Then he asks the strangers where they come from. Odysseus tells him, and begs for mercy, reminding him that all over Greece men do honour to his father Poseidon. The war of Troy has destroyed

Greeks enough ; let not these outcasts furnish a meal to the Cyclops. Silenus advises his master to be sure to eat the tongue of the speaker, that he may grow eloquent.

The Cyclops answers Odysseus by defining his own principles.

“Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man’s god ;  
All other things are a pretence and boast.  
What are my father’s ocean promontories,  
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me ?  
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove’s thunderbolt ;  
I know not that his strength is more than mine.  
As to the rest, I care not when he pours  
Rain from above ; I have a close pavilion  
Under the rock, in which I lie supine,  
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,  
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously  
Imitating the thunder of high heaven.  
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,  
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,  
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.  
The earth by force, whether it will or no  
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,  
Which, to what other god but to myself  
And this great belly, first of deities,  
Should I be bound to sacrifice ? I wot  
The wise man’s only Jupiter is this,  
To eat and drink during his little day,  
And give himself no care.”

He passes into the cave, leaving Odysseus in despair. He prays that Pallas may save him from this peril, greater than the dangers of the Trojan siege, and warns



Zeus, the god of the stranger, to punish such sins against his divinity, if he would still have it held in reverence. The chorus are disgusted with the Cyclops' gluttony and his inhospitable treatment of the strangers. They are resolved no longer to dwell beneath the roof of a cannibal.

Meanwhile Odysseus has been inside the cave ; he comes out and relates how the Cyclops has just made a meal of two of his comrades.

"Then I had a happy thought. I offered him a goblet of wine to drink. He enjoyed it immensely, and I gave him cup after cup. Then he broke into wild song, and so I have come secretly to ask if you will help to save yourselves and me."

The chorus are quite ready to help, and Odysseus unfolds his plan, which is to prevent the Cyclops from summoning his brother monsters to drink with him, and to keep him drinking till he sleeps heavily. Then his eye is to be put out with a burning brand, and Odysseus and his party are to hurry on board ship and escape. The chorus shout with joy. But hearing the Cyclops, they quickly strike up a stirring Bacchic song :

"Happy he that merry makes  
With the liquor of the grape,  
At the banquet lying free,  
With a pillow to his head,  
And a comrade at his arm."

The Cyclops comes out of the cave athirst for wine, and asks Odysseus to pour him out some more. Odysseus advises him to keep such divine liquor for himself, and let his friends have none of it. Silenus gives the same advice, and as he pours it out manages to lap some up himself. The Cyclops asks the stranger's name. "I am Outis (Nobody)," answers Odysseus. The Cyclops drunkenly fancies himself Zeus upon his throne, and Silenus his Ganymede. He kisses him lovingly, and takes him into the cave.

Now comes the critical moment. Odysseus prays to Hephæstus and to Sleep, daughter of dark Night, to aid him, and enters the cave. The chorus express the hope that they may soon see again the Bromian god, and leave the dreary dwelling of the Cyclops. Odysseus reappears; already the giant is sunk in deep slumber. He asks the satyrs for their aid; but the cravens excuse themselves upon shallow pretexts. They will sing an Orphic strain of enchantment, that the stake may of itself thrust and twist itself into his eye. Odysseus must do the deed alone with his comrades' help. He accomplishes his work to the joyous strains of the choral song. The giant wakes and shrieks in agony, "Outis has undone me!" He comes from the cave to seize the criminal. The chorus have to guide him, but they lead him astray, so that he bruises his head cruelly against a rock. Odysseus then tells him his real name. The Cyclops says:

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“Alas ! The ancient oracle is accomplished ; it said that, by you, coming from Troy, I should have my eye-sight blinded.”

Amid his threats Odysseus hurriedly puts to sea with his companions, the chorus of satyrs following them in triumph.

“And we, the shipmates of Odysseus now,  
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.”

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DECLINE OF TRAGEDY.

TRAGEDY was for several decades the form in which the poetical talent of the time found expression. This popularity gave rise to a large number of writers who, with the three great dramatists whom we have discussed, took part in the competition for the tragic prize. Many who were not Athenians essayed this mode of composition; and any one who considered himself the author of a good tragedy sought to have it produced at Athens (Plato, *Laches*, p. 183 A), although it was a very difficult matter for one who was not a citizen to win a prize. It is a remarkable fact that the art was followed by descendants of all the three great tragedians, indeed for several generations in the case of the family of Æschylus. His son Euphorion won the prize four times with plays of his father's not produced till after his death. He also composed pieces of his own, but of these only one insignificant fragment has survived.

A more important poet was Philocles, a nephew of Æschylus, who composed almost a hundred plays somewhat after his uncle's style. We have already mentioned that he carried off the prize against the

*Œdipus the King* of Sophocles. Among his plays was a tetralogy, *Πανδιονίς*, which contained a *Tereus*; other tragedies of his were *Erigone*, *Nauplius*, *Œneus*, *Priam*, *Penelope*, an *Œdipus*, and a *Philoctetes*. He had two sons, Morsimus and Melanthius, the former an oculist by profession and unimportant as a tragedian, the latter the author of a *Medea*. Morsimus had a son of greater note, Astydamas, who appeared first in ol. 95, 2 (399 B.C. : Diod. xiv. 43), and according to Suidas wrote 240 plays and was victorious fifteen times, on one occasion in 372 B.C. with his *Parthenopæus*. In consequence of this victory a brazen statue was erected to him in the theatre (Diog. Laert. ii. 43). His two sons, Astydamas and Philocles, both practised tragic composition, the former after having been a pupil of Isocrates. Among his plays were the *Epigoni*, *Madness of Ajax*, *Bellerophon*, *Tyro*, *Alcmene*, *Phœnix*, *Palamedes*, *Hector*, and a satyric drama entitled *Heracles*.

Iophon, the son of Sophocles, produced fifty plays, among which were the *Achilles*, *Telephus*, *Actæon*, the *Fall of Troy*, *Dexamenus*, and the *Bacchæ* or *Pentheus*. Some of these he had written in collaboration with his father. The younger Sophocles, son of Ariston, who produced his grandfather's *Œdipus at Colonus*, wrote forty plays (but according to other accounts only eleven), and was victorious seven times. An *Orestes*, *Medea*, and *Polyxena* are mentioned by Suidas as plays by the younger Euripides, son or nephew of the great

tragedian, to whom is also attributed an edition of the Homeric poems.

Of the remaining tragedians the most important are Ion, Achæus, Aristarchus, and Neophron.

Ion of Chios was a clever, versatile, and accomplished writer, who had also some repute as an elegiac poet, an epigrammatist, and a writer of prose. He won a dramatic victory in 452 B.C., and in honour of the occasion presented each Athenian citizen with a flask of Chian wine (Athen. i, p. 3 F). There were thirty to forty tragedies by him, eleven of which are known to us by name. Among them is one with the strange title *Μέγα Δράμα*. The fragments of them that have come down to us are of no importance. He was no longer living in 421 B.C., for Aristophanes in the *Peace* speaks of him as dead.

Achæus of Eretria had also died before that date. He was a rather younger contemporary of Sophocles, born in ol. 74. He composed about forty dramas; but as he was not an Athenian, he only once secured a prize. His satyric dramas were especially famous; indeed there are at least seven such dramas among the eighteen plays known to us by name. His style was as a rule spirited, though occasionally somewhat laboured and lacking in clearness.\*

Aristarchus of Tegea, a contemporary of Euripides,

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\* Athen. x., p. 451 C : γλαφυρὸς ὢν ποιητῆς περὶ τὴν σύνθεσιν ἔυθ' ὅτε καὶ μελαίνει τὴν φράσιν καὶ πολλὰ αἰνιγματωδῶς ἐκφέρει.

composed seventy pieces and was twice victorious. He lived to be a centenarian. We know the titles of only two of his plays, the *Achilles* and *Tantalus*, the former of which was "adapted" by Ennius. There is a line from an unknown tragedy of his which afterwards became proverbial: τὰδ' οὐχ ὑπαρχων, ἀλλὰ τιμωρούμενος. There is an extraordinary allusion to him in Suidas (ὅς πρῶτος εἰς τὸ νῦν αὐτῶν μῆκος τὰ δράματα κατέστησε, "who was the first to make his plays of the present length"), which is not explained by interpreting it to mean that Aristarchus, like Sophocles, produced single plays instead of tetralogies.

Neophron of Sicyon was the first, according to Suidas, to introduce pedagogues and the torturing of slaves on the stage, the latter however, in accordance with the rules of dramatic art, only being referred to in speeches of messengers, not represented on the stage. If he was really the first to introduce pedagogues, he must have been an earlier contemporary of Euripides.

This date would be in full accord with a tradition which goes back as far as Aristotle and Dicæarchus, a tradition too confirmed by at least one of the two fragments of the play still extant, that Euripides used the *Medea* of Neophron in writing his own play of the same name. If this is so, the statement of Suidas that Neophron lived in the time of Alexander, and died at the same time as his friend the philosopher Callisthenes, must be based on some confusion.

Neophron wrote 120 pieces, but with the exception of some fragments of the *Medea*, nothing, not even the names, has come down to us.

The poets whose activity coincided with the period of the ochlocracy up to the end of the Peloponnesian War were in general marked by an effort to popularize the political, religious, and moral ideas of the time. As imitators of Euripides, they were all "poets with a purpose," who introduced the ideas of the present into the world of myth, and paid their homage to the feeling of the day even in the words they used and the form of their poetry and music. Their pieces were calculated to produce a momentary effect, and made no pretensions to lasting interest; hence nothing has survived out of the large number of tragedies which belong to this period. We owe our very knowledge of the names of the poets to the jests pointed at them by Aristophanes, and a few isolated quotations in Athenæus, Stobæus, and the later grammarians. Of this poetical aftermath Dionysus says in the *Frogs* (l. 92): "A chattering set they are, a school of twittering chirpers. If they can once get a play represented, the effort is the end of them; they have not enough virility for another. Among the wooers of tragedy there is not now one man, not one with a true bold voice." \*

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\* ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα,  
 χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, λωβηταὶ τέχνης,



Aristophanes here had specially in view a family of poets, consisting of the grandfather Carcinus of Agrigentum, his four sons, Xenocles, Xenotinus, Xenarchus, and Datis, and his grandson Carcinus the son of Xenocles, a whole potful of tragic "crabs," as Droysen calls them. In ol. 91 Xenocles with his *Œdipus*, *Lycaon*, *Bacchæ*, and satyric play *Athamas*, carried off the prize from the *Alexander*, *Palamedes*, *Trojans*, and *Sisyphus* of Euripides. But Ælian, who records this fact (*V. H.* ii. 8), expresses his astonishment at the decision. "Either the jury were intellectually incompetent to give a proper verdict, or else they were bribed; either alternative is discreditable to the Athenians." The younger Carcinus wrote according to Suidas 160 plays, but once only attained a victory, probably with his *Ærope*. He lived for a long time at the court of the younger Dionysius. His pieces include an *Orestes*, an *Œdipus*, and a *Medea*.

Nor did Meletus, the accuser of Socrates and composer of an Œdipodean trilogy, escape the jests of the comic writers (*Arist.*, *Ran.* 1302; *Æl.*, *V. H.* x. 6).

A poet of greater moment than these or other contemporaries was Agathon the son of Tisamenus, who was born at Athens in ol. 83. He was widely cele-

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ἂ φρουῶδα θᾶπτον, ἦν μόνον χορὸν λάβῃ  
 ἅπαξ προσουρήσαντα τῇ τραγωδίᾳ.  
 γόνιμον δὲ ποιητὴν ἂν οὐχ εὖροις ἔτι  
 ζητῶν ἂν, ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι.

brated for his good looks and polished manners. He won his first prize at the Lenæa in ol. 90, 4 (417 B.C.), and celebrated the victory by the banquet which Plato afterwards immortalised in his *Symposium*. Agathon was a friend of Euripides. They visited Archelaus, king of Macedon, together ; and there he died about 402 B.C. He seems to have carried the faults of Euripides' manner to their utmost possible pitch. In several of his plays he seems to have treated the plot in an epic rather than a dramatic spirit, and by so doing damaged the unity of the legend (Arist., *Poet.*, cap. xviii.). He attempted to make an effect and to surprise the spectators by unexpected developments of the plot, and wonderful, and often improbable, *dénouements*. He excuses himself in the two characteristic lines :

“It may be called a likelihood in life,  
That many things unlikely will befall.”\*

Among his pieces were the *Ærope*, *Alcmæon*, *Thyestes*, *The Mysians*, and *Telephus*; probably he also wrote a *Fall of Troy*. *The Mysians* was the first tragedy in the musical setting of which the chromatic scale was used (Plut., *Quæst. Conv.*, p. 645, E). In this and other musical and rhythmical innovations Agathon followed the tastes of the dithyrambists of the

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\* τάχ' ἂν τις εἰκὸς αὐτὸ τοῦτ' εἶναι λέγοι,  
βροτοῖσι πολλὰ τυγχάνειν οὐκ εἰκότα.

time. He was also, according to Aristotle (*Poet.*, cap. xviii.), the first to introduce what were called ἐμβόλιμα in place of the choral odes ; these were songs or stanzas used independently as an *entr'acte*, and having no connexion with the action of the play. Aristotle further tells us (*Poet.*, cap. ix.), that he was bold enough, instead of taking his subject from the mythology, to invent a plot and characters of his own, in a play entitled *The Blossom* (ἄνθος). Such is the name that has come down to us, though Ἄνθης and Ἀνθέας are in themselves more probable titles. Aristophanes has burlesqued his flowery, superfine, and effeminate style in the *Thesmophoriazusæ*. He was particularly fond of expressing himself in clever antitheses, epigrams, or neatly balanced sentences, and other forms of rhetorical adornment in the manner of Gorgias, faults which Plato has admirably reproduced in the speech which he puts into his mouth in the *Symposium*. He himself clearly considered this one of the characteristics of his poetry ; for when a friend asked him to purge his plays of antithesis, he said, " You do not see that that would be to purge Agathon's plays of Agathon " (*Æl.*, *V. H.* xiv. 13).

Next to Agathon we may mention Critias, chief of the thirty tyrants, who composed tragedies as well as prose works and elegies. Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* ix. 54) has preserved a long fragment from his *Sisyphus*, in which he drily refers to faith in the gods

as a clever man's device for holding the masses in check. This piece could hardly have been intended for public performance.

In the period which followed the Peloponnesian War, along with the continual decay of political and religious life, tragedy sank more and more into mere rhetorical display. The school of Isocrates produced the orators and tragedians Theodectes and Aphareus. Theodectes won the prize eight times, on one occasion with his tragedy *Mausolus* in the contest which the queen Artemisia had instituted in 351 B.C., in honour of her dead husband. On the same occasion he was defeated in rhetoric by Theopompus (Gell. x. 18). *Mausolus* was especially adapted for recitation. Suidas says, ἐνίκησε μάλιστα εὐδοκιμήσας ἐν ᾗ εἶπε τραγῳδία; from which it appears that the whole contest was one of declamation. A good idea of what these dramas for reading and recitation were like, with their accompaniment of cold, rhetorical pathos, and their strong leaning towards the horrible, may be gained from the plays of the philosopher Seneca. Of the fifty tragedies of Theodectes we have the names of about ten and a few unimportant fragments; among them were an *Ajax*, *Ædipus*, *Orestes*, and *Philoctetes*. Stobæus makes the following pessimistic quotation from an unknown tragedy of his:

“All human things grow old, and to an end  
Comes every birth of time, save only one,

Save only wickedness ; but that, methinks,  
Fast as the race of mortals doth increase,  
Increaseth equally from day to day." \*

Aphareus, the son of Hippias the sophist, and the adopted son of Isocrates, who had a reputation as an orator as well, left behind him thirty-seven tragedies, and had been successful in winning four victories.

The only fact we know of Moschion is that he attempted to introduce historical subjects again ; for besides his *Telephus* there were plays of his called *Themistocles* and the *Pheræans*.

Of the poets who wrote specially for recitation (ἀναγνωστικοί: Arist., *Rhet.* iii. 12. 2) Chæremon was the most famous on account of the brilliancy of his picturesque style (γραφικὴ λέξις). His is the maxim, τύχη τὰ θνητῶν πράγματ' οὐκ εὐβουλία,† which Plutarch has taken as the text of his little essay *Περὶ Τύχης*. According to Aristotle (*Poet.*, cap. i.), he employed every possible form of metre in a play called the *Centaur*. Such ingenuity is unpleasantly suggestive of the aberrations of the Alexandrine period. This is still more the case with the *dilettante* efforts of the elder Dionysius of

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\* ἅπαντ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισι γηράσκειν ἔφν  
καὶ πρὸς τελευτὴν ἔρχεται τὰ τοῦ χρόνου,  
πλὴν ὡς ἔοικε τῆς ἀναιδείας μόνον.  
αὕτη δ' ὅσῳ περ αὖξεται θνητῶν γένος  
τοσῶδε μείζων γίγνεται καθ' ἡμέραν.

† The affairs of men doth luck, not wisdom, rule.

Syracuse, who amused himself with an extraordinary production full of etymological trifling.\* However one of his tragedies carried off the prize at Athens at the Lenæa in 368 B.C. He celebrated his victory at Syracuse with some brilliant festivities, which laid the foundation of an illness from which he never recovered (Diod. xv. 74).

From what has been already said of the tragedians of the second and third rank, it may be seen how enormously rich in tragedies Athens was. The total number has been estimated at 1,400 (Welcker); but this conjecture is to a large extent based on the figures of Suidas, and the numbers he attributes to each dramatist are in the highest degree untrustworthy. Whatever the actual amount of this literary treasure was, only a portion of it reached the Alexandrines. Each century lessened the number; and when the Greek world was submerged in the tribes of invading barbarians, little more existed than what we have now, that is to say, a small selection from the works of the three great tragic poets. It is possible that in the most favourable cases the details which Byzantine

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\* Athenæus says of him (iii., p. 98, D), but without specifying whether the expressions come from his tragedies or from his other writings: ὃς τὴν μὲν παρθένον ἐκάλει μέανδρον, ὅτι μένει τὸν ἄνδρα, καὶ τὸν στύλον μενεκράτην, ὅτι μένει καὶ κρατεῖ, βαλλάντιον δὲ τὸ ἀκόντιον, ὅτι ἐναντίον βάλλεται, καὶ τὰς τῶν μυῶν διεκδύσεις μυστήρια ἐκάλει, ὅτι τοὺς μῦς τηρεῖ.

scholars give us of the former extent of dramatic poetry may rest on extracts from Alexandrine works of literary history ; but these in their turn were mostly based on accounts given by the older Peripatetics, who were themselves no longer in a position to insure accuracy of detail. We can form no opinion as to the extent to which books served in the golden age of tragedy to bring these masterpieces before a larger circle of readers. But there is no doubt that plays were read at home apart from any scenic representation. In classical times there were no collected editions of the complete works of any particular poet ; and the official copy of Lycurgus, to which we have already referred, contained only the most popular pieces of the great tragedians, those, namely, which formed the standing *répertoire* of the stage. Otherwise it would have been impossible for Heraclides Ponticus, the pupil of Plato and Aristotle, and a learned though uncritical scholar of wide knowledge, to have passed off tragedies of his own composition as the work of Thespis. Nor would he have allowed himself to be deceived as to a *Parthenopæus*, which was the work of a certain Dionysius, and was passed off as Sophoclean, to the extent of placing it in one of his books under the name Sophocles. Dionysius afterwards confessed the deception to him, but he refused to acknowledge that he had made a mistake. There is not the slightest reason for doubting the truth of this story.



## NOTES.

<sup>1</sup> PERHAPS rather "*that no dramatist should take this subject*" (χρησθαι τούτῳ τῷ δράματι). Here *drama* (action) means what we call the plot.

<sup>2</sup> *The Areopagites who appear at the end of the "Eumenides."* To the *Eumenides* there are extra characters of two kinds : (1) mute persons, such as the judges of the Areopagus ; and (2) an extra chorus at the end of the play, Athenians in scarlet robes, who conduct the Eumenides to their sanctuary. The text seems to unite the two.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that this connexion of the number of the chorus with the number of the actors is but a conjecture ; and that it may be doubted whether the performance was so elaborately formal as this and other such theories would imply.

<sup>4</sup> This does not of course mean that the chorus in Æschylus had not dramatic life and action. In the *Suppliants*, the *Seven against Thebes*, and the *Eumenides*, the chorus are very important characters. Sophocles, it might be more correct to say, contrived to retain some dramatic life in the chorus, in spite of the subordinate position to which it was reduced. In Euripides it is often a mere appendage. Whether that was the fault of Euripides, or due to growing perception of the radical vice in choric drama, is a question too large to be here discussed. I may perhaps refer for my own opinion to the "Introduction" to my recent translation of Euripides' *Ion*.

<sup>5</sup> It is now rather thought, and in my judgment rightly, that the *catharsis* of this definition signifies, as Milton took it, not *cleansing*, but *purgation*, *discharge*. The pleasure which we have in the strong excitement of our feelings by acted story is compared by



Aristotle to the physical relief of discharging a secretion. We have too much "pity and fear" in us, and get rid of some. As an illustration at least his theory is both ingenious and instructive.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to believe that Horace was not here laughing in his sleeve. "A trusty keeper of secrets" the chorus has indeed to be, since to carry on the plot things must be entrusted to them which any one of sense would instantly disclose. In the two later dramatists the staple of the choric part (except the *odes*) is just such commonplace as Horace prescribes. But we may note that the ingenious plot of the *Ion* turns on the fact that the chorus promptly and properly betray a secret, though forbidden on pain of death.

<sup>7</sup> Something near blank verse in effect, but with six feet instead of five.

<sup>8</sup> The reason of this difference was partly historical—the *chorus*, as a separate thing, having been largely developed by Doric poets—but chiefly practical. As the main purpose of the chorus was to mark the breaks between the scenes, a broad difference between *chorus* and *dialogue* was desirable.

<sup>9</sup> It has now been found that there is no trace of a stage-building on the site of this theatre earlier than the rebuilding about 340 B.C. In the time of the great tragedians the stage was probably of wood, and so were all its adjuncts, the background, etc.

<sup>10</sup> There are two changes of scene in the *Eumenides*, first from Delphi to the Acropolis at Athens, and then from the Acropolis to the Areopagus. Probably the changes made were very simple. From the practice of the dramatists it is plain that changes were found inconvenient.

<sup>11</sup> This is from Vitruvius (first century A.D.), who doubtless describes correctly the Greek theatres of his own time. But it has long been suspected, from the internal evidence of extant dramas, that the stage of the fifth century B.C. was very different, and the recent discovery of a stage at Megalopolis in Messenia (supposed about 380 B.C.) will probably decide the question. It is a platform about *six* feet high, approached from the orchestra by

steep stone steps. Something like this was probably the stage of Euripides, that of Æschylus lower still, and both communicating easily with the orchestra. The account of the relations between actors and chorus, as given in the text, would have to be modified from this point of view.

<sup>12</sup> This lower "chorus platform" was a supposition to meet the difficulties of reconciling Vitruvius with the dramatists. It will probably not be any longer maintained.

<sup>13</sup> These names should probably be confined to groups of plays connected in subject, such as the *Orestea* of Æschylus. It must be understood that the four plays exhibited at once were, after Æschylus, generally not so connected.

<sup>14</sup> The *didascalizæ* were an official record of the main facts of each performance at the *Dionysia*, the names of the contending poets, of their plays, of the *choregus* who supplied the funds, etc. The name is derived from *διδάσκειν*, *to teach*, the poet being said to *teach* the performers. Aristotle compiled from such sources a book on the history of the drama, fragments of which have come down to us in prefaces to the plays and elsewhere.

<sup>15</sup> The plot of the *Seven* is here imperfectly described. The action in the earlier part of the play turns entirely on the fact that Eteocles, who does not wish to meet his brother, is by a fatal series of accidents kept ignorant that Polynices is seeking the encounter, until it is already decided that Eteocles shall be champion at the seventh gate, which Polynices is attacking. Then Eteocles will not draw back, and thus the curse of the house of Laius is fulfilled. See my edition of the play, or a smaller edition by Mr. M. A. Bayfield and myself.

<sup>16</sup> *The seventh gate did king Apollo choose*; i.e. Apollo, against whose prohibition the parents of Eteocles and Polynices married, brought about the fatal encounter, by which the disobedience was finally punished.

<sup>17</sup> This is also the opinion of Professor Tucker, the latest editor of the play.

<sup>18</sup> The chorus were still fifty in number, accompanied by hand-

maidens. On the scenic effect the *Introduction* of Professor Tucker should be read.

<sup>19</sup> It is not perhaps certain that there are three actors *who speak in the same scene*, which was the true limit. It has been supposed that Prometheus was represented by a giant figure, from behind which a voice spoke for him. If so, two actors would be enough for the piece. But there are three in the *Orestea*, and in one scene of the *Agamemnon* we may say that there are four.

<sup>20</sup> With regard to the plot of the *Agamemnon* I can only refer, for my own opinion, to my recent edition of the play. If I am right (the question is still under debate) the author's exposition is defective, and indeed wrong in the main conception. His view, the view current until lately, labours under one great difficulty, besides some smaller, partly apparent here in the text, but much more conspicuous in the play. The arrival of Agamemnon at Argos with the remnant of his army, after the destruction of Troy and a fatal storm in the passage, is distinctly represented (if the former view be correct) as occurring within a few hours of the first intelligence of the capture, transmitted in the course of the night by beacons. To state the true answer to this difficulty, and the resulting view of the plot, is here impossible. It must be enough to say generally that the pretended beacons are a fraud, and that upon this fraud turns the whole success of Ægisthus and Clytæmnestra. See also an essay on "The Unity of Time" in my recent edition of Euripides' *Ion*.

<sup>21</sup> The scene is again changed to the *Areopagus* hill. The changes made in the decoration were probably very slight according to our notions.

<sup>22</sup> On the election of Sophocles as *strategus*, or member of the highest administrative board (the English *general* is not quite an accurate rendering), see Professor Jebb's Introduction to the *Antigone*. His main conclusions, which seem perfectly convincing, are (1) that the election is a fact; (2) that it may very well have been due to the *Antigone*; but (3) that there is no reason to connect it with the sentiments expressed by Creon in the play.

<sup>23</sup> See above, note 5.

<sup>24</sup> From these remarks, as from the whole estimate of Euripides by the author, I must dissent. Euripides was as truly interested in religion as either of his predecessors, and had a much truer perception than either of them of the line in which religion should and did advance. This was no special merit in him, or demerit in them, but simply means that he belonged to a later generation. Younger than Sophocles in time, he was very much "later" in feeling and education. Much of Euripides' work was written with the express purpose of arousing the "indignation" of which the author speaks, of exposing and destroying the doctrine of Olympus, a religious purpose, if ever there was one. I make this remark once for all: if the reader wishes to see with what amazing skill and power this purpose of Euripides was pursued, I would venture to refer him to my edition of the *Ion*.

<sup>24</sup> \* "I represent men as they should *be represented*" would be a more exact reading of the Greek. The limitations of which Sophocles speaks were really imposed, not by the nature of drama as such, but chiefly by the very peculiar and in some respects very inconvenient conditions of the Greek *choric* drama. That Euripides was impatient of these conditions, and practically infringed them, is perfectly true. They were incompatible with his objects, and incompatible also, as was soon seen, with the full and permanent character of drama itself.

<sup>25</sup> That such a conclusion as this should ever have been seriously put forward on such grounds is a proof how far criticism had travelled off the road. The whole judgment of Greek tragedy was long perverted by prejudices based historically on the doctrine of "the unities," as it was developed in the French Renaissance, and without any foundation in the true facts. Nor is the mischief quite ended yet.

<sup>26</sup> "Er gab *mit Recht* dem Stücke des Sophocles . . . den Vorzug." Of course this is only a presumption; we have no means of judging for ourselves.

<sup>27</sup> The *hypothesis* is the brief Greek preface which in the MSS.

is generally found at the beginning of the play, sometimes in two or three different forms. These prefaces are of unequal value. Here and there they preserve fragments of authentic and ancient tradition, particularly those derived from the *didascaliz*; but in their present shape they are of late origin, and for the most part have neither value nor authority. The remark quoted here is a specimen of their inferior parts.

<sup>28</sup> "The surprise which has been expressed by some modern writers appears unnecessary. The composition of Philocles was probably good, and it has never been held that the judges of such prizes were infallible" (Jebb, "Introduction" to the *Æd. Tyr.*). For anything we know to the contrary the work of Philocles was actually better.

<sup>29</sup> This description is, in my judgment, exaggerated and one-sided. There is no proof that morality declined in the age of Euripides, still less that this supposed decline had any connexion with that intellectual advance which was the chief fact of the time. That the collapse of the old religion produced much general unsettlement of mind is true enough; but this collapse was inevitable, and the first step in true progress. It is the main difference between Euripides and his predecessors on the side of doctrine and theory, that he was under no delusion and practised no concealment about this. Æschylus lived too early to see the truth; Sophocles, if he saw it, suppressed his convictions, perhaps for good motives of morality or art. But when Euripides came, it was high time that he should come.

<sup>30</sup> I have already noted that this rendering is not perfectly accurate. It should run "that Sophocles represented men as they should *be represented*; Euripides, as they are": αὐτὸς μὲν οἷους δεῖ (ποιεῖν) ποιεῖν: ἐκείνον δ' οἷοί εἰσι. The truth is, that the different treatment sprang from a difference in purpose. It was the very object of Euripides to break the spell of the old myths, an object which he sought both for moral and artistic reasons. In degrading the divine and heroic personages he acted consistently with his purpose, and in some of his best plays (*e.g.* the *Ion*) the contrast

of the "divine" and the human contains the chief significance of the work.

<sup>31</sup> This is true and extremely important. The inherent defects of the *choric* drama, and the impossibility of working out under its limitations all the possibilities of dramatic art, were naturally better seen with time and experiment. That Sophocles was conscious of them is clear. Euripides is ever striving to throw them off, and in many of his best plays (*e.g.* the *Medea*) practically does so, though of course with some sacrifice of artistic consistency. If in the next century, or, still more, in the third century B.C., there had risen any tragedian at all equal in power to Sophocles or Euripides, he would assuredly have struck into non-choric drama, and would then have had a far better field than the poets of the fifth century.

<sup>32</sup> In some cases the prologue has other functions also. Thus in the *Ion* the prologue declares certain "intentions of Apollo." These intentions in the sequel are defeated, and upon this turns an important part of the poet's meaning.

<sup>33</sup> It should surely be mentioned that when Orestes and Pylades do this Orestes is almost mad, that both he and his friend are under unjust sentence of death, and that for their fate Helen is indirectly responsible and Menelaus directly; and, further, that the Helen and Menelaus of the drama are persons utterly despicable in their falsehood, cowardice, and cruelty. Here, as in many places, the author criticises Euripides without sympathy, and consequently, as I think, without equity.

<sup>34</sup> It was not consistent with the purpose of Euripides that any such "tragic illusion" should be permitted.

<sup>35</sup> The remarks here made on the *Andromache* rest on what are, in my opinion, misapprehensions. See the Preface.

<sup>36</sup> She had no connexion whatever with the murder of her husband. She is a proud and yet spiritless woman, and she is left, by her own acts, absolutely in the power of a hard-hearted man, who does not care for her, except as an instrument of his ambition, and to whom she has done a great injury. If ever any human being was destined to misery, it is Hermione at the end



of this play. The only success in the play is that of Orestes, who obtains that sort of temporary triumph which does in fact often fall, as the world goes, to cunning selfishness.

<sup>37</sup> The purpose of this device is not always properly understood. See the *Ion*.

<sup>38</sup> "*Commatic*" scenes are properly "scenes of *mourning*", but the name was extended to all scenes in lyric metres performed jointly by an actor or actors on the stage and the chorus in the orchestra, probably because the original use of such had been in laments. The *monody* or *aria* is a lyric solo. That of Creusa in the *Ion* (v. 859) is one of the finest.

<sup>39</sup> It is more than probable that this "tag" became a formula of the stage, and has been inserted in these five plays by later hands. It has no particular connexion with them, and to the *Medea* is particularly inapplicable.

<sup>40</sup> This play, which is of the highest importance, both as literature and as a historical document, has recently been treated in an elaborate and excellent edition by U. von Wilamowitz-Möllerndorf. He has rightly observed that the true title is simply *Heracles*, a point which proves to be of some significance.

<sup>41</sup> On this play, the interpretation of which is important to the comprehension of Euripides, I can only refer once more, for my own opinion, to the "Introduction" in my edition of it. The apparent "defects of composition", which deserve all, and more than all, that is said of them in the text, arise from the fact that the solution of the plot offered by the goddess Athena is not meant to be accepted, and is, in fact, rejected as insufficient by the principal character in the piece. The true solution, intended and suggested by Euripides, is totally different.

<sup>42</sup> Or rather to be accurate, it is not accomplished, Helen being suddenly conveyed away by Apollo, with whom she appears, in an aërial vision, at the end of the piece. In this play, as generally in Euripides, the part played by the gods, and by Apollo in particular, is highly unsatisfactory and rather ridiculous, according to the intention of the author. Aristophanes justly describes

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him as "so representing deities in his plays as to bring their existence into discredit."

<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that the messenger reports only the unsuccessful *attempt* of Orestes and Iphigenia to escape. They do not actually get away, but are forced back to shore by a wind which springs up as they start. When the messenger comes, they are at Thoas' mercy, and he has only to seize them. As is the way with Euripides, the design of the gods would fail completely if it were not abruptly rescued by an apparition, which in reality, we feel, would not have occurred at all. The enforced and sudden submission of Thoas is, and is intended to be, unsatisfactory to the feelings and intelligence, the more so as it is accompanied by a palpable innuendo upon the divine proceedings.











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